PEACE MAKER 鐵
Nanae Chrono Presents
黒乃奈々絵
クロガネ
2

PEACE MAKER 鐵
KUROGANE

Peace Maker Kurogane 2

Created by NANAE CHRONO

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PEACE MAKER鐵
KUROGANE

Volume 2
by Nanae Chrono

ICHIMURA TETSUNOSUKE

HIJIKATA'S PAGE

BRASH TETSU HAS JOINED THE SHINSENGUMI TO LEARN TO BECOME STRONG. HE WANTS TO GET REVENGE ON HIS PARENTS' MURDERERS, CHOUSHUU REBELS. ALTHOUGH HE JOINED THE SHINSENGUMI WITH ASPIRATIONS OF BECOMING A SWORDSMAN, HE'S BEEN ASSIGNED THE THANKLESS DUTY OF HIJIKATA'S PAGE.

HIJIKATA TOSHIZOU

VICE COMMANDER

BECAUSE OF HIS COLD DEMEANOR AND BRUTALITY, HE IS KNOWN AS THE "DEMON VICE COMMANDER."

YAMANAMI KEISUKE

VICE COMMANDER

THIS BUDDHA-LIKE VICE COMMANDER COULDN'T BE LESS LIKE HIJIKATA. HE'S OFTEN SEEN CARRYING HIS ABACUS.

OKITA SOUJI

CAPTAIN OF THE FIRST SQUAD

THE BEST SWORDSMAN IN THE SHINSENGUMI. HE'S GENERALLY CALM AND FRIENDLY, BUT WIELDING A BLADE CAN TRANSFORM HIM INTO A HEARTLESS KILLER.

KITAMURA SUZU

A BOY WITH SILVER HAIR. HE HAS NO FAMILY AND LIVED WITH HIS MASTER, YOSHIDA TOSHIMARO, UNTIL YOSHIDA WAS SLAIN DURING THE IKEDAYA INCIDENT. NOW SUZU IS...?

KONDOU ISAMI

DIRECTOR

A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE SHINSENGUMI AND ALSO A MASTER AT THE SHIEIKAN DOJO IN EDO, THE MAIN DOJO OF THE TENNEN RISHIN STYLE.

MAIN CHARACTERS

NAGAKURA SHINPACHI

CAPTAIN OF THE SECOND SQUAD

SMALL BUT STRONG. A SWORDSMAN LIKE OKITA. HE FIGHTS IN THE SHINTO-MUNEN SCHOOL STYLE.

TOUDOU HEISUKE

CAPTAIN OF THE EIGHTH SQUAD

ONE OF THE THREE STOOGES OF THE SHINSENGUMI. HE LIKES CUTE THINGS, INCLUDING TETSU.

HARADA SANOSUKE

CAPTAIN OF THE TENTH SQUAD

A GIANT AMONG MEN, HE'S A MASTER OF THE SPEAR IN THE HOZOIN SCHOOL STYLE. HE'S GOOD FRIENDS WITH SHINPACHI.

ICHIMURA TATSUNOSUKE

TETSU'S OLDER BOTHER AND GUARDIAN. HE'S ALWAYS WORRYING ABOUT TETSU. TATSU WANTS NOTHING TO DO WITH SWORDFIGHTING, AND IS A BOOKKEEPER FOR THE SHINSENGUMI.

YAMAZAKI SUSUMU

SHINSENGUMI NINJA

A SPY FOR THE SHINSENGUMI, HE REPORTS TO HIJIKATA. TACITURN AND COLD, HE HOLDS MANY SECRETS.

SAYA

TETSU SAVED HER FROM SOME RUFFIANS, AND NOW THE TWO ARE FRIENDS. SAYA CANNOT SPEAK, BUT COMMUNICATES THROUGH HAND GESTURES AND WRITING.

SHINSENGUMI MEMBERS

PERSONS OUTSIDE THE SHINSENGUMI

THE STORY OF PEACE MAKER

IN THE FIRST YEAR OF GENJI, 1864, JAPAN WAS IN GREAT TURMOIL. MILITANT AND XENOPHOBIC FORCES, WHICH HAD LONG OPPOSED THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE, ADVOCATED EXPELLING WESTERN INFLUENCE AND RESTORING THE EMPEROR IN KYOTO TO POWER. TO PROTECT THE SHOGUNATE'S INTEREST IN KYOTO, A LEGENDARY PEACEKEEPING FORCE WAS FORMED FROM TWO HUNDRED-SOME RONIN. THEY WERE THE SHINSENGUMI. THIS IS THE STORY OF ICHIMURA TETSUNOSUKE, WHO SOUGHT TO JOIN THEM.

CONTENTS

第六話◎CHAPTER 6・TROUBLES …… 9
第七話◎CHAPTER 7・RAIN …… 41
第八話◎CHAPTER 8・SNOW …… 79
第九話◎CHAPTER 9・VOICES …… 116
第拾話◎CHAPTER 10・ROPE …… 146

難雨雪声縄

Act 6
Troubles

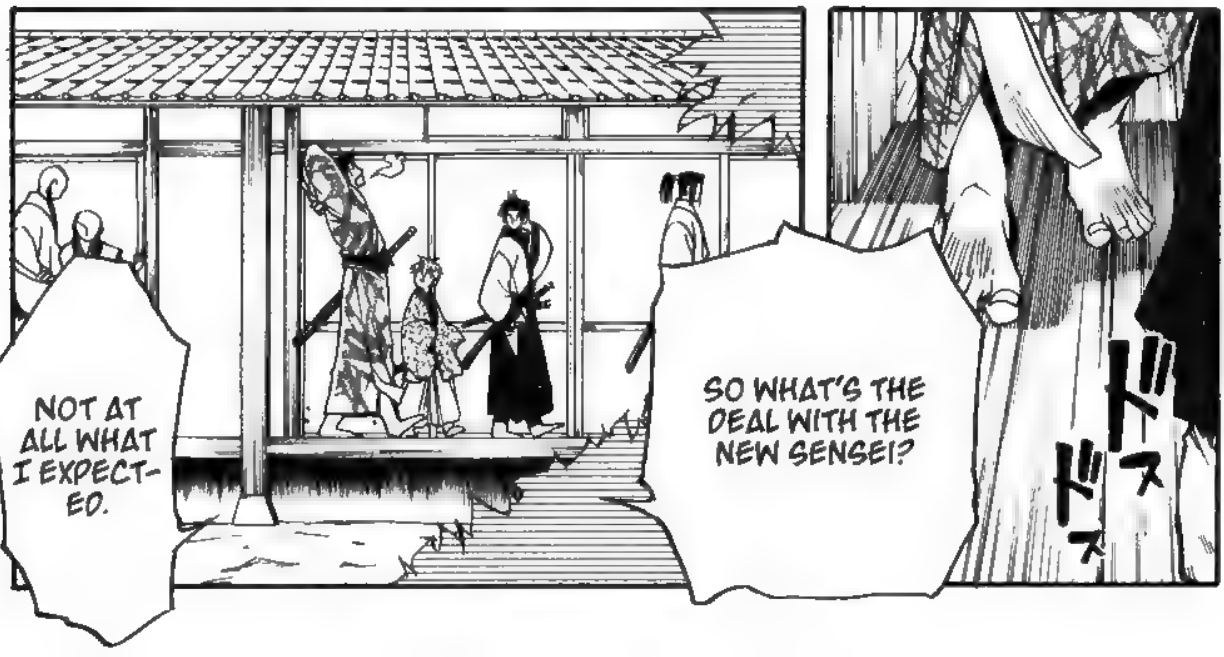
第六話 難 (だいろくわ なん)

THE FIRST YEAR OF GENJI, OCTOBER, 1864. ITOU OOKURA ENTERS THE SEVENTH GROUP.
THE SHINSEN-GUMI WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE SECOND REFORMATION. ITOU WILL LEAD IT.
OUR RECENT RECRUIT-ING TRIP TO EDO...
...HAS YIELDED A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST INDEED.

OUR COMRADE IN LOVE AND RESPECT FOR THE BELOVED EMPEROR ...
ITOU-DONO... A WORD, IF YOU PLEASE?
I WON'T BOTHER WITH INTRODUC-TIONS. I'M A SIMPLE MAN.
THIS COMING YEAR'S WORK, FOR WHICH I HAVE BEEN SO GRACIOUSLY ENLISTED, WILL BE MY LIFE'S WORK.
I WISH I COULD CARVE THE JOY AND PRIDE I FEEL INTO MY SKIN, FOR ALL TO SEE.
THIS YEAR, BY THE SEXAGE-NARY CYCLE, IS THE FIRST YEAR. KINOE OF THE "YANG WOOD RAT."
すっ...

ITOU KASHITAROU
TO HONOR THIS, I CHANGE MY NAME TO ITOU KASHITAROU-- "MAN OF THE YANG WOOD RAT" ...
... HENCEFORTH, WITH ALL DUE GRATITUDE AND FELLOWSHIP.
YOU GOT IT, KASHI-TAROU-SENSEI!
So cool!
WA HA HA HA!
CALM DOWN, HEISUKE!
I'LL PASS.
C'MON, YAMANAMI-SAN, YOU GOTTA SAY SOMETHING TOO! YOU'RE HAPPY!
IT'S FINE! WE'RE CELEBRATING, REMEMBER?
YOU MORON. YOU DRUNK ALREADY?

...


NOT AT ALL WHAT I EXPECTED.
SO WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THE NEW SENSEI?
ドス
ドス

NO QUEER POINTS AT ALL.
THAT'S IT! HE'S SO BORING!
MAYBE NOT, BUT HE'S A SMART-LOOKING, DAMN GOOD MAN. I THINK.
WAIT, YOU'RE AGREEING WITH US?
EVERY-BODY'S GOT QUEER POINTS. RIGHT? AND WITH THAT PERFECT MASK OF HIS...
WOOOO!
PFFT! WHAT-EVER, YOU TWO!
...DON'T TELL ME THAT'S WHY YOU DRAGGED US HERE?
HEI-SUKE...
Hee hee!
LOOK FAST, NOW! THERE'S QUEERNESS ENOUGH TO SATISFY ALL.
WHAT IF HE DOES NOTICE?!
EEEEH?
IT'S NO PROBLEM IF HE DOESN'T NOTICE YOU.
DON'T WORRY.
I'M HALF JOKING.
HALF?!

...
Wah ha ha ha!
BUT ALL OF US STARTED OUT AS PUPILS. YOUR SUCCESS ISN'T IN QUESTION.
FOR A HUMBLE DOJO OWNER LIKE MYSELF TO APPEAR ON THIS GRAND STAGE!
FATE IS SUCH AN ODD, WONDER-FUL THING.
?

WE SHALL ERADICATE THOSE TRAITORS WHO SEEK THE DOWNFALL OF OUR LAND.
I HUMBLY JOIN THE RANKS OF THE SHINSENGUMI, SAFEGUARDING THE PALACE GROUNDS.

WITH THAT INTELLECT OF YOURS, TOGETHER LET US SAVE THE SHOGUNATE!
Glance
...
WHAT TRUST-WORTHY WORDS!!
Sigh...

DIRECTOR KONDOU, IT IS MY PATRIOTIC INTENT TO BE AN AGENT IN ADVANCING YOUR WILL.
ITOU-DONO...!

HE WAS INVOLVED IN THE IKEDAYA INCIDENT!
Tee hee!
OFF-TOPIC, BUT THE VICE COMMANDER IS ALSO QUITE LAUDED.

?
...?

DON'T BRING THAT UP!
Heh heh heh...!
GAH HA HA HA!
...WE SHOULD AT LEAST PRETEND THEY'D SOMETIMES PREFER THE COMPANY OF WOMEN, IF YOU GET MY MEANING.
WHILE GOOD MEN ARE WONDER-FUL...
wah ha ha ha!
WE HAVE QUITE A COLLEC-TION OF SUPERIOR MEN HERE.
IT CAN'T BE...
...
Hm.
...
HIJIKATA-DONO.

Heh heh!
I'VE HEARD FROM KONDOU-DONO AND TOUDOU-KUN...
...SHINSEN-GUMI'S SOLITARY STRAT-EGIST...
AHEM!
WHU --?!
...ER.
WHAT IS IT?
A BATTLE OF LAYERED MEANINGS
OUR SUCCESS IS ALL DUE TO KONDOU-SAN'S DIRECTION.
YOU'RE MAKING FAR TOO MUCH OF IT.
THE SHINSENGUMI IS WHAT IT IS TODAY THANKS TO YOU, IS WHAT THE DIRECTOR MEANS.
HEH HEH.
...BUT YOU FAR EXCEED MY EXPECTATIONS, WITH YOUR MANLY DEMEANOR AND FAVORABLE IMPRESSION.
WELL, THANKS FOR THAT. THAT'S THE FIRST I'VE HEARD ABOUT HOW FAVORABLE I AM TO OTHER MEN...
ITOU-DONO, DON'T BE OFFENDED BY THIS RAPSCALLION BEING SO PRICKLY.
KONDOU-SAN...!!
SOMEBODY WHO DOESN'T GET IT.
Ha ha ha ha!
Heh heh heh!
Well....
WA HA HA HA HA! GIVE IT UP, TOSHI! THERE'S NO NEED TO BE SO HUMBLE WITH ITOU-DONO NOW THAT HE'S ONE OF US!

SOMEBODY ELSE WHO DOESN'T GET IT
WHY DON'T YOU SHOW HIM AROUND, AND DEEPEN THE NEW CAMARA-DERIE?
WON'T ANYONE HELP ME?!
AFTER ALL, ITOU-DONO HAS TAKEN AN INTEREST IN YOU.
HUH? OH, NO.
WON'T YOU EXPLAIN OUR GROUNDS?
... YAMANAMI-SAN, YOU INTRODUCED US TO THE NORTH STAR STYLE AFTER ALL. NOW...
Heh heh heh heh heh
...
H-HEY! WHAT'S THE RUSH?
I STILL HAVE WORK TO DO, SO I'LL TAKE MY LEAVE.
EXCUSE ME.

I'M SO VERY SORRY, ITOU-DONO. IT SEEMS HE'S IN A BAD WAY TODAY.
Heh heh heh...
HE'S UNEX-PECTEDLY SHY.

WELL THEN, KONDOU-DONO...
...PLEASE ALLOW ME TO EXCUSE MYSELF.

SHUFF
HIJIKATA TOSHIZOU. HMM.
Heh heh.

I'D LIKE TO EXPLORE THE GROUNDS.
OH! I'LL OPEN THE DOOR FOR YOU!

EVEN IN THIS STIFLING PLACE, A MAN OF EDO MAY FIND A BREATH OF FRESH AIR...
...AND A COMPANION, A "GOOD MAN" FAR EXCEEDING MY EXPECTATIONS.

SHINSENGUMI!!
OH, DO ENTERTAIN ME--
THIS CERTAINLY PROMISES TO BE INTEREST-ING.

HO Ho Ho ho ho ho!!!
NOOOO-I-I
Ho ho hoho hoho ho ho...
fu fu fu fu fu...

HA HA HA HA! DON'T MAKE FACES LIKE THAT! HE LIKES OLDER MEN. MORE SOMBER. THAT'S HIS TYPE.
I mean, there're exceptions, but still..
AHH. IS THAT SO?

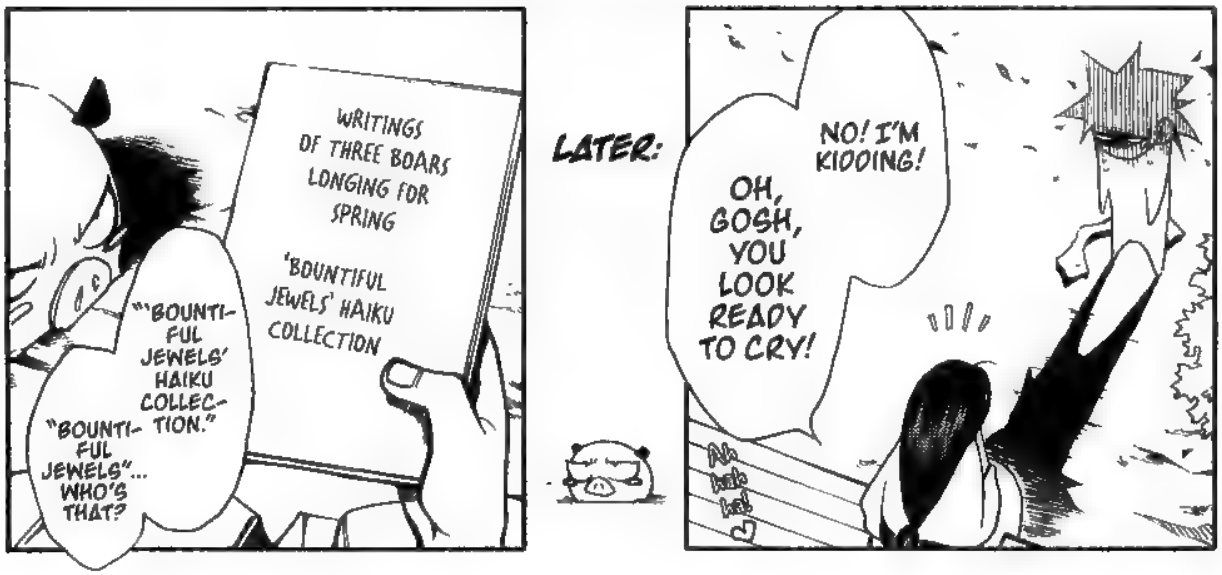
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
Ho ho ho ho ho ho ho!

ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
BUHYAAAA!
COOOOOLO!
Ah hah ha!
!
Ha ha ha ha!
ICHIMURA! MAKE SURE YOU PUT A COMPRESS WHERE I HIT YOU.
Or you'll be stuck with a nasty bruise.
WILL DO! THANKS!

OKITA-SAN...
WRITINGS OF THESE BOARS LONGING FOR SPRING "BOUNTIFUL JEWELS" HAIKU
OH. TETSU-KUN. YOU JUST FINISHED TRAINING?
You're smiling funny...
OKITA-SAAAAAN, WHATCHA READING?
POEMS? WHAT KIND? WHOSE?
EH HEH HEH! IT'S SECRET!
OOH, I GET IT!
OKITA-SAN WROTE THEM!
Ah heh heh
WRONG!

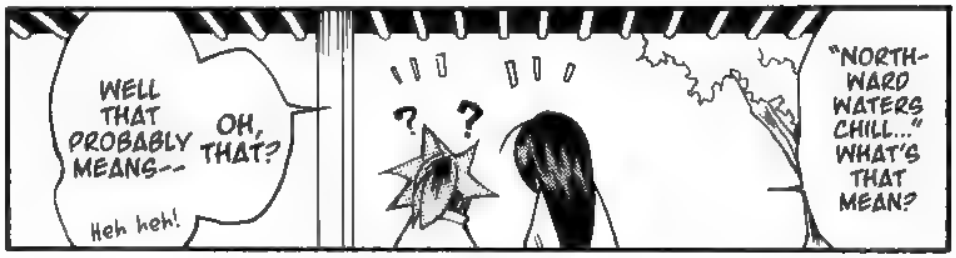
I GUESS IT CAN'T BE HELPED. BUT JUST FOR YOU, TETSU-KUN!
JEEZ...
Heh heh!
LET ME SEE ONE! I CAN JUST SEE IT, RIGHT? RIGHT?
YOU'VE GOTTA TELL ME! I'M SUUUUPER INTER-ESTED NOW!

...IT'LL BE YOUR HEAD.
IF YOU CARE-LESSLY LET IT SLIP TO AN OUTSIDER ...
YOU SEE, THIS IS ACTUALLY TOP SECRET MILITARY INFOR-MATION WHICH HAS BEEN ENCODED.


WRITINGS OF THREE BOARS LONGING FOR SPRING
'BOUNTIFUL JEWELS' HAIKU COLLECTION
"'BOUNTI-FUL JEWELS' HAIKU COLLEC-TION."
"BOUNTI-FUL JEWELS"... WHO'S THAT?
LATER:
NO! I'M KIDDING!
OH, GOSH, YOU LOOK READY TO CRY!
Ah heh heh ♡

"FACING ONE ANOTHER CRYSTAL CLEAR, THE HEART PROJECTS REFLECTING WATER."
HMMM...
I DON'T GET IT.
UHHN.. LET'S SEE.
FA-... FACING--

AH HAH HA HA
HA!
NOOOO. THERE'S A DEEPER MEANING TO IT... PROBABLY.
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES A PLUM TREE BLOSSOMS, IT'S STILL ONLY GOING TO GIVE YOU PLUMS. THIS IS WEIRD!
AH!
WHAT'S THIS? "THE PLUM TREE'S FLOWER, IF ONE BLOOMS THEN YOU'LL HAVE A PLUM-TREE'S PLUM PLUM PLUMP"?!

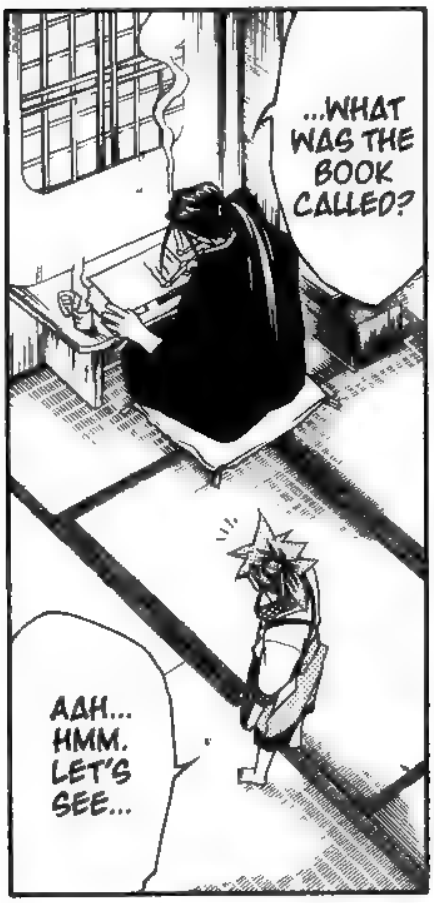

WELL THAT PROBABLY MEANS--
OH, THAT?
Heh heh!
? ?
"NORTH-WARD WATERS CHILL..." WHAT'S THAT MEAN?

HUUH...

UGH, IT'S ALL SMOKY IN HERE!
COUGH!
COULDN'T YOU OPEN THE FRONT DOORS IF YOU WANT TO SMOKE?
IT'S MY PREROGATIVE.
VICE COMMANDER ...I'VE BROUGHT SOME TEA.
YES.
HUH?
YOU'RE IMAGINING THINGS.
...
VICE COMMANDER, YOU SEEM LIKE YOU'RE IN A FOUL MOOD.
what happened?
Aha ha..
AS IF WE COULD GET ALONG.
FROM WHAT I HEARD YOU TWO DON'T GET ALONG VERY WELL!
IS IT SOMETHING ABOUT THE NEW GUY? ITOU?

STRANGE, I KNOW. BUT...
...IT MIGHT HELP YOU RELAX!
I KNOW, VICE COMMANDER! MAYBE YOU SHOULD WRITE SOME HAIKU?

It was so weird, I couldn't tell if it was great or terrible!
IT WAS WRITTEN BY SOME REGIMENTAL SOLDIER SOMEWHERE.
THIS MORNING, OKITA SHOWED ME A REALLY FUNNY BOOK OF POEMS.
...


...WHAT WAS THE BOOK CALLED?
AAH... HMM. LET'S SEE...

ICHIMURA...

"BOUN—"
...
...no.
What
was it?
!

SOUJIIIIIIII!!
TCH!
HE RAN AWAY! DAMN IT!
Gone!
SOU--
WILL YOU STOP YELLING?
YOU'RE DISTURBING THE NEIGHBORS, HIJIKATA-SAN!
GET OUT HERE RIGHT NOW! SOU---JI!
SOUJI!
YOU SHOULDN'T RUN WITH A WEAPON!
MAYBE THE AUTHOR'S A REALLY GREAT POET. I DON'T GET IT.

Yamazaki-kun, you traitor!
ANSWER ME!
NOT AT ALL.
WELL, THANKS, YAMAZAKI-SAN! I'M LUCKY YOU HAPPENED TO BE PASSING BY OVERHEAD.
BASTARD. WHERE IS IT?
I FIGURED A CERTAIN SOMEBODY WOULD BE OUT FOR BLOOD.
GIVE ME THE THING. NOW.
IF YOU DO IT NOW, I MIGHT LET YOU LIVE.
I KNOW IT'S EMBARRASSING, BUT MAKING HIM COMMIT SUICIDE?
V-VICE COMMANDER!
DO YOU WANT TO BE PUNISHED?
STOP THIS...INSOLENCE! GIVE IT TO ME!
NO WAY! IT'S MINE!

OOH? HEY THERE, TETSU-KUN!
A HUNDRED SPANKINGS AND NO SUPPER FOR YOU!
RIGHT. I'M LEAVING.
UH, VICE COMMAND-ER? I'M UP HERE TOO...
IF YOU WON'T COME DOWN TO ME, MY SWORD WILL COME UP TO YOU.
FINE.
HM. YOU KNOW ...
THE VICE COMMAND-ER SNAP-PED...
KYAA HA HA HA HA!
THERE'S NO WAY OUT OF THERE, SOUJI!

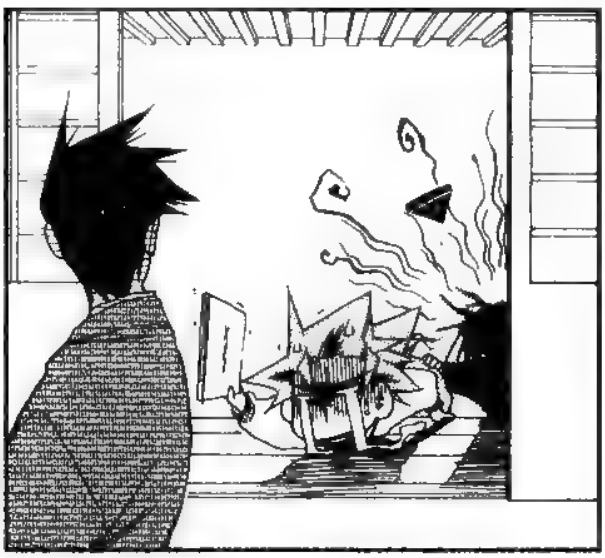
CURRENTLY HOUSED AT HIS PARENTS' HOME IN HINO, UNDER GUARD AND ON DISPLAY.
WRITINGS OF THREE BOARS LONGING FOR SPRING
"BOUNTIFUL JEWELS" HAIKU COLLECTION
BEFORE HIJIKATA TOSHIZOU JOINED THE SHINSENGUMI, HE WROTE A POETRY COLLECTION. "BOUNTIFUL JEWELS" WAS HIS PEN NAME.
HOW DID YOU GET IT IN THE FIRST PLACE?
OOOH? WASN'T IT YOU WHO GAVE IT TO ME?
NO!
OH NO, HIJIKATA-SAN, YOUR OWN CREATION, EACH VERSE FILLED WITH YOUR LOVE!
HAVING SOMETHING EMBARRASSING LIKE THAT IS TERRIBLE.
STOP SMIRKING WHEN YOU SAY THAT!

AHEM!
"KNOWING THAT YOU LOST, NOT KNOWING THAT YOU ARE LOST--"
DON'T RECITE IT!
WHOA...
HIJIKATA-SAN'S LOST IT.
Give it back!
OH?
TETSU-KUN!
YOU'RE SAFE(?)!
OKITA-SAN!
wheeze wheeze
LATER:
I WANT TO SEE TOSHI RUN LAPS! IT'S BEEN SO LONG!
STOP IT!

GYAAA-
AAAH!!!
OKITA-
SAAAAN!
DO SOME-
THING!
JUST RUN
AWAY!

HERE--
GO! GO!
WRITINGS OF THREE BOARS LONGING FOR SPRING
"BOUNTIFUL JEWELS" HAIR COLLECTION

UM...
VICE COMMANDER...?
GIVEooo
ITooo
BAAAAACKooo!

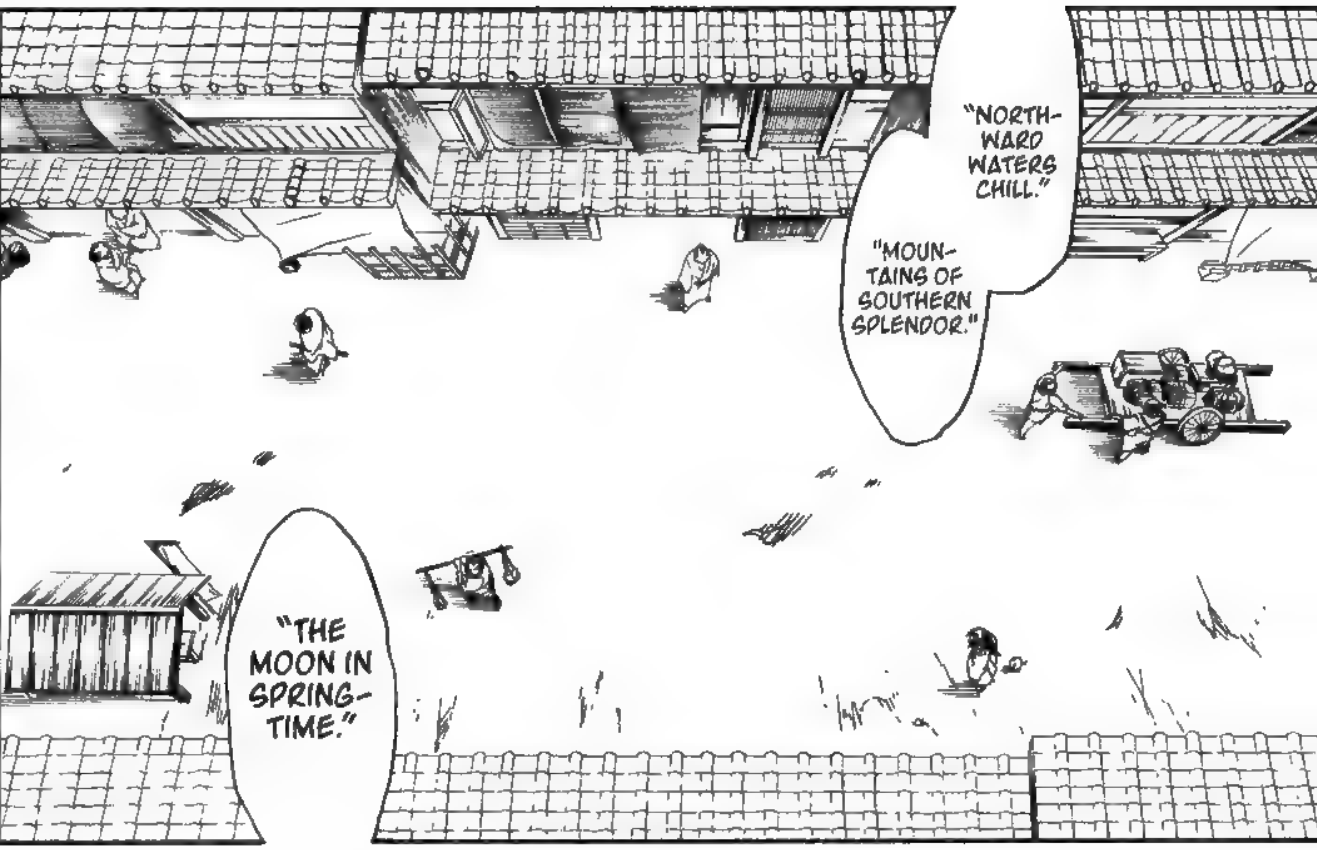


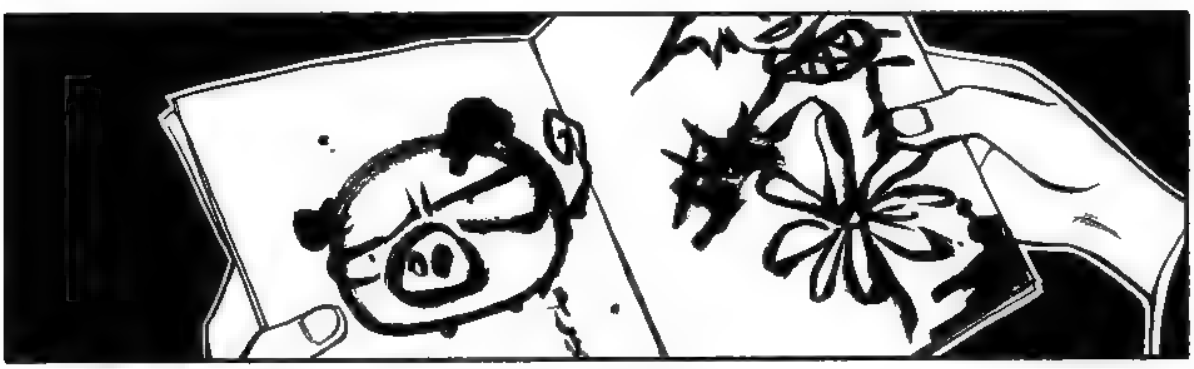
SU-
SUSUMU
...

TRAITOR!
I HUMBLY RETURN THIS.
Now relax.
wheeze wheeze
...
OH, YOU'RE NOT BETRAYING YOUR MASTER?
QUIET, SUSUMU! YOU'RE NOT JUST BETRAYING ME, BUT OKITA-SAN, TOO!

I WAS HOPING TO KEEP THIS THING QUIET.
WAS I WRONG TO SHOW IT TO TETSU-KUN?
HUH?
IT'S YAMANAMI-SAN.
HEY! HEY!!
BUT... ...GETTING HIJIKATA-SAN TO DROP HIS COOL FAÇADE WAS DEFINITELY WORTH IT!
Heh heh!

A KATANA?
AND IT'S BRAND NEW.
...


"NORTH-WARD WATERS CHILL."
"MOUN-TAINS OF SOUTHERN SPLENDOR."
"THE MOON IN SPRING-TIME."



I'M SO SORRY I COULON'T BE OF SERVICE.
Okita-san, well done.
AH... OF COURSE... IT'S A FAKE.

Haa
Haa
Haa
Haa

WHAT'S WRONG?
LEAVE IT THERE.
SANNAN-SAN.

第七話
Act.7
Rain

...
...
LOOKS LIKE THE RAIN'S LETTING UP.
WE SHOULD TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS BEFORE THE MOON APPEARS.
SOUJI AND I WILL ATTACK FROM THE GARDEN.
WE'LL LEAVE THIS SIDE TO YOU.

"ASSASINATE SHINSENGUMI DIRECTOR SERIZAWA KAMO."
IT'S AN ORDER FROM MATSUDAIRA KATAMORI-SAMA.
WE MUST ACT ACCORDING TO OUR USUAL PROTOCOL.
OUR OPPONENTS ARE LIKE SAKE DRINKERS. THEY WANT TO GET DRUNK ON CHAOS TONIGHT.

A COMPASSIONATE THOUGHT, BUT IMPRACTICAL.
AT LEAST ...
... CAN'T WE SPARE THE WOMEN?
WE SEE THEIR TRUE COLORS FAR TOO OFTEN.
THOSE WOMEN HAVE INTOXICATED OUR MEN AS OFTEN AS THEY'VE MET THEM.
BOTCHING AN ASSASSINATION WILL TURN INTO AN ANNOYING JOKE FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.
...WHICH ROOM IS HERS?
THAT GIRL...
...AMONG THEM IS A GIRL WHO JUST NOW ARRIVED. INNOCENT
HOWEVER ...

SO WE'RE REPAYING THAT "DEBT" BY ERAS--
THERE'S NO DEEPER MEANING TO THIS.
THE DIRECTOR MAY HAVE BEEN HEAVY-HANDED...
...BUT HIS BRAND OF INTIMIDATION HAS ALSO SAVED US.
ATTACKING AN ALLY, EVEN A TEMPORARY ONE, IS SOMETHING YOU SHOULD NEVER DO. ISN'T THAT "ANNOYING" ENOUGH?
YAMA-NAMI-SAN, CALM DOWN!
...
"ANNOY-ING"?!
"IF THEY ARE IN THE WAY, KILL THEM."
"IF THEY ARE USEFUL, USE THEM."

THAT'S ALL WE'RE TALKING ABOUT.
YAMANAMI-DONO?
HOW ARE YOU FARING?

HA HA HA HA...
FORMAL, ARE WE?
SOUNDS VERY LIKE TOUDOU-KUN.
YES.
I HADN'T SEEN HIM IN SO LONG... BUT HE WAS NEVER ONE TO MINCE WORDS.
IT SEEMS THE CURRENT COMMANDER IS KNOWN FOR BEING TOO LENIENT.
Heh heh...
I WOULDN'T PUT IT THAT WAY. IT'S EASY TO ATTACK THE MAN AT THE TOP, ISN'T IT?
DIRECTOR KONDOU HAS ALSO PLACED A GREAT DEAL OF TRUST IN YOU.

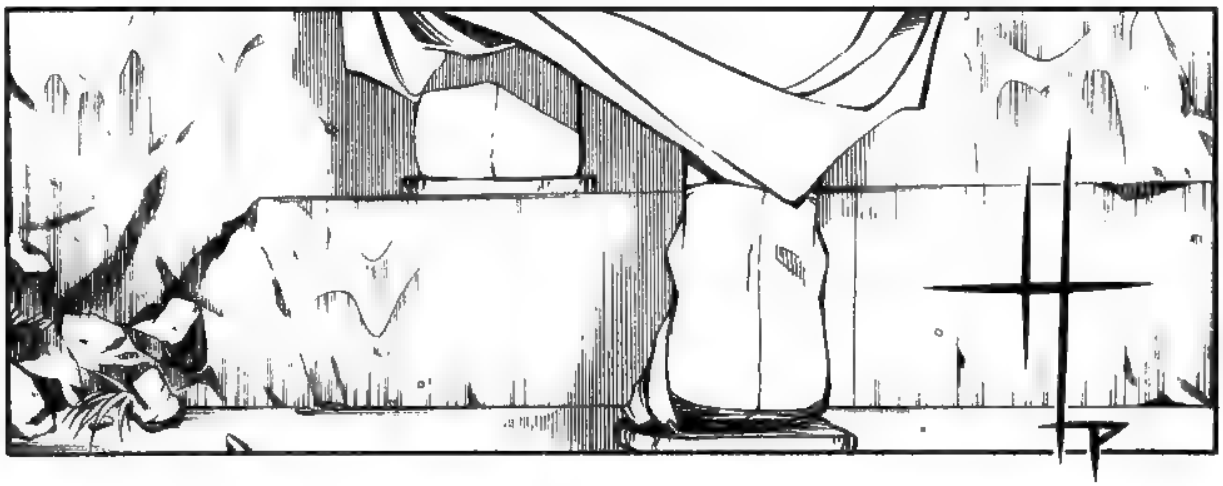
YOU'RE A VERY ABLE PERSON.
THE SHINSEN-GUMI ARE A PERMANENT FIXTURE NOW...
...SO PLEASE TREAT THE SHINSEN-GUMI WELL.
...
SO IT IS TRUE.
?
YOUR WORDS BETRAY YOU.
THERE IS A GREAT DISTANCE BETWEEN YOU AND THE SHINSENGUMI.

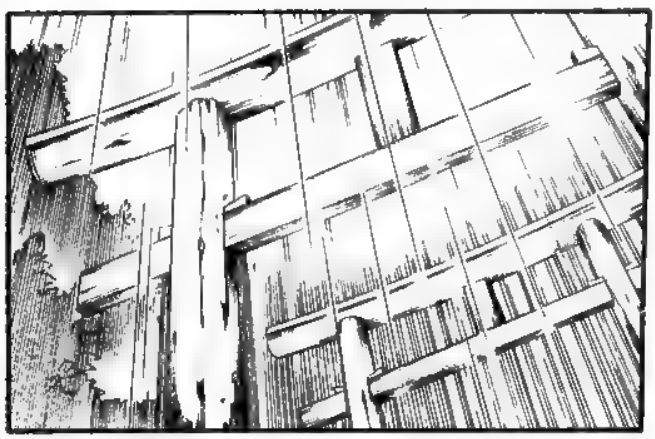
DO YOU THINK SO?
HA HA...
THAT'S ODD.
THIS MAY BE NOTHING BUT IDLE SPECULA-TION...
...YOU DOUBT THE GROUP'S DIRECTION.
...BUT YOU'RE ILL AT EASE HERE.
IN OTHER WORDS ...

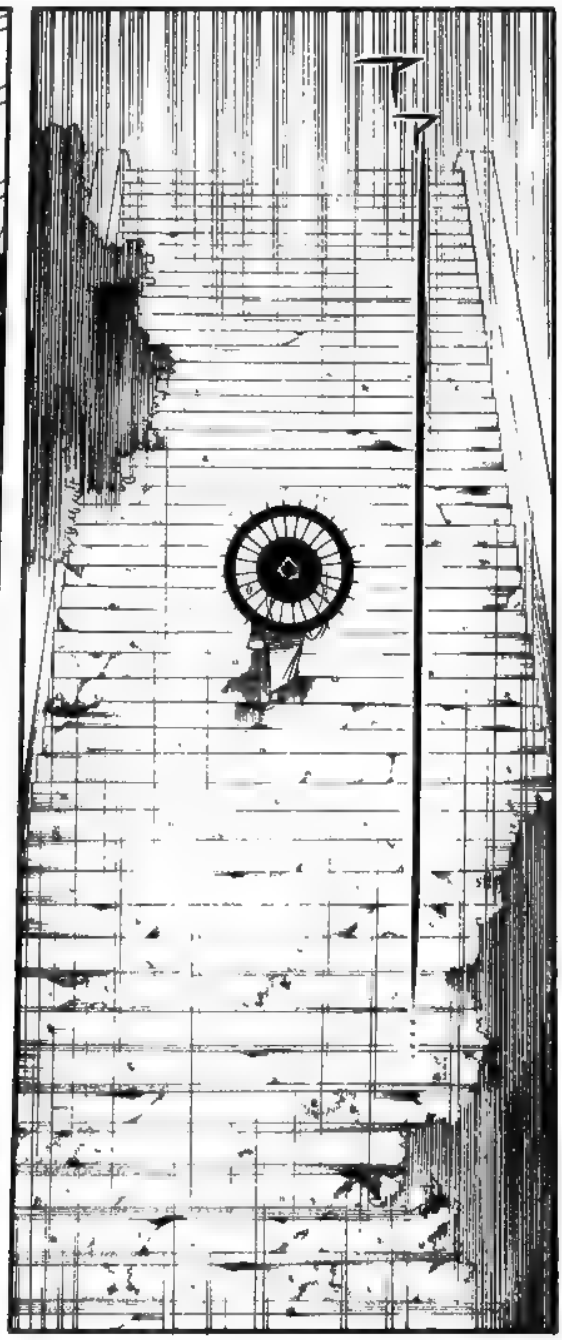
AM I CLOSE?
A VICE COMMANDER, OPPOSING THE GOALS OF THE GROUP...
...AND FEELING OPPRESSED ABOUT IT?
SO WHO IS IT? DIRECTOR KONDOU? NO, NO.
HE COMMANDS THE WHOLE GROUP. HE HIMSELF WOULD--
THAT'S NOT IT!

THE SHINGEN-GUMI IS DOING REMARK-ABLY WELL...
...AND HIJIKATA-KUN IS A GREAT COM-MANDER.
IF THERE IS ANY PROB-LEM...
...THEN...I AM THE ONE AT FAULT.
IF YOU WILL EXCUSE ME.

MORE THAN I THOUGHT ...
...HE IS CONFLICTED.
OR IS HE?

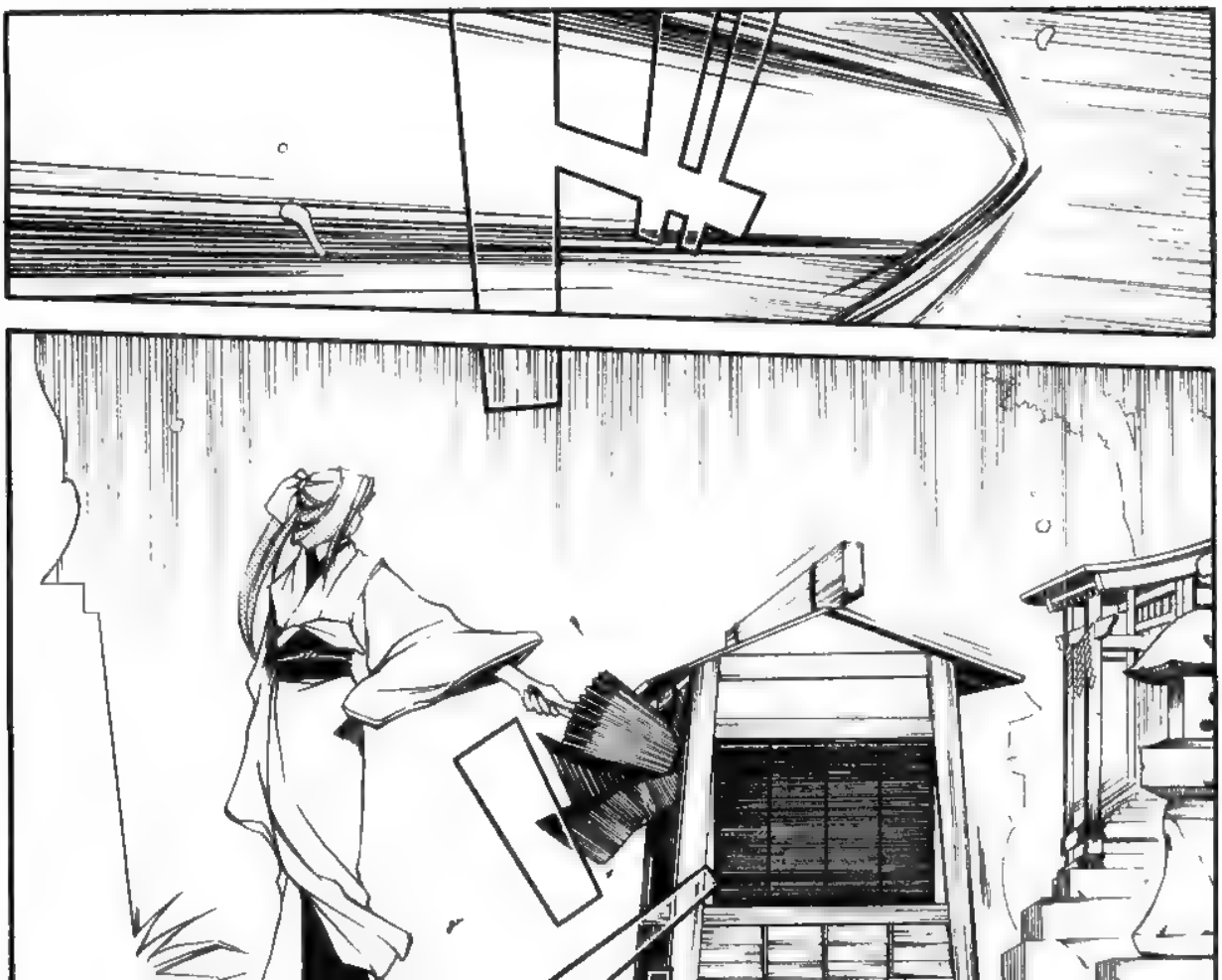






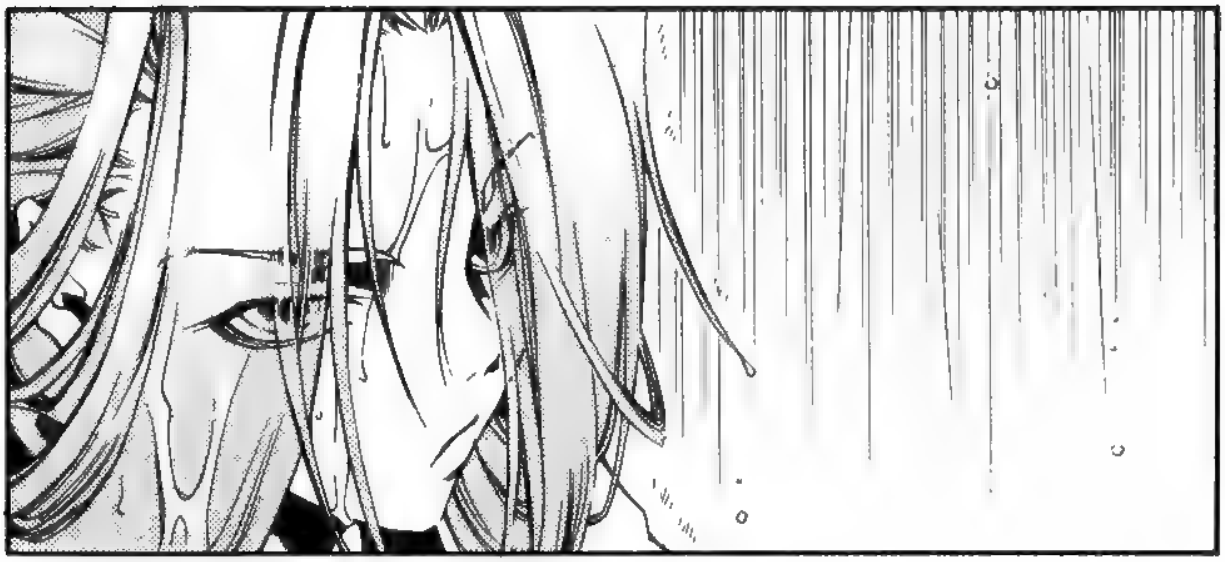
HELLO.
THANK YOU FOR COMING.

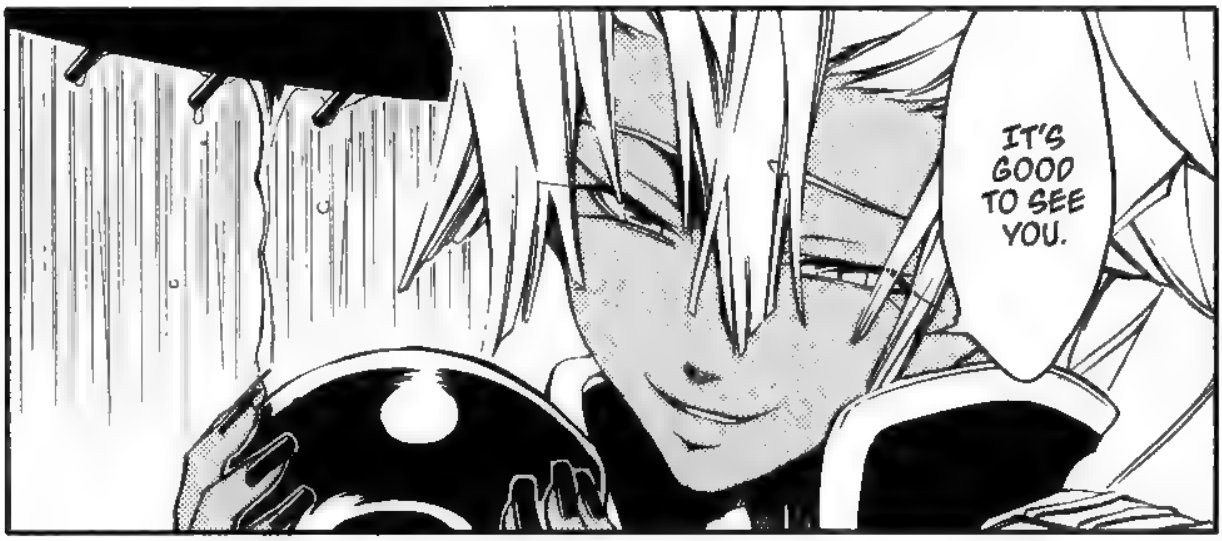
SO I THOUGHT YOU WOULDN'T SHOW UP.
IT SEEMS YOU HATE ME FOR SOME REASON.
...



I DON'T OPERATE THAT WAY. ASSUMING.
IF YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SAY...
...SAY IT TO ME STRAIGHT.
チリン!!
I STILL DON'T KNOW.
WHAT ARE YOU ANGRY ABOUT?

OR... COULD IT BE...
...YOU'RE FRIGHT-ENED?




IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.

Heh heh...
BUT THINGS ARE GOING VE-RY WELL WITH YOUR "MARKS."

NOT THAT I CARE ABOUT YOUR "DAY JOB."

HM.
SEEMS EVERY-THING'S THE SAME WITH YOU

"YAMA-TOYA SUZU-SAMA."
YOU'RE DOING FINE, TOO.
...
THERE ISN'T A PERSON IN KYO OR OSAKA WHO DOESN'T KNOW THE MASTER OF THE WEALTHY "YAMATO-YA."
YOU'VE EVEN BORROWED THE DAIMYO'S MERCHANT FLEET TO RUN YOUR LOAN SHARK BUSINESS.
BUT YOU AREN'T WORRIED ABOUT THAT SUPPOSED "ROBBERY," ARE YOU?
TEN DAYS AGO, THE PREVIOUS MASTER WAS KILLED.

HM...
SO THEN WHAT BUSINESS DO YOU HAVE TODAY?
DID YOU COME TO BUY MY INFORMA-TION?
HEH HEH HEH!
BAD NEWS TRAVELS SO QUICKLY.
HEH HEH HEH...
...
?
HAH HAH HAA!

I DON'T NEED IT.
BECAUSE...
...WHO REALLY CARES ABOUT THAT, ANYWAY?
THE SHINSEN-GUMI, THE SHOGU-NATE...
...LOYALTY TO THE EMPEROR, THE REVO-LUTION?
NONE OF IT MAT-TERS.
...ABOUT CHOUSHUU?
HOW THEY'VE SEVERED THEIR CONNEC-TIONS?
EXACTLY.

I CAN DO ANYTHING I WANT.
I'M FREE NOW.
パチャ
WHAT ...
...ARE YOU PLAN-NING?

COME, NAZUKI.
WAIT.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU--
I'M BORED!
WE'RE GOING, HIKAGAMI!
AS YOU WILL, SIR.

WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?
I HAVEN'T EVEN DONE ANY-THING YET.

...
USELESS LITTLE KUNOICHI-SAN.
YOU'LL BE ENTER-TAINED, TOO.
JUST WATCH AND WAIT.

...
STOP IT.

IF NOTHING ELSE, JUST STOP THAT..
...YAMA-NAMI-SAN

WHAT AN EYESORE.
WHO ELSE?
AAH, ITOU-DONO?
?
HE'S GOT YOU TOO, HUH? I'M BEGINNING TO THINK HE CAN DO ANYTHING.
Haaa...
HE'S SO SLENDER AND PALE. MUCH PRETTIER THAN OTHER MEN.
?
STOP RIGHT THERE!

WHY DID HE JOIN THE SHINSEN-GUMI? IT'S SUSPI-CIOUS.
A COMMON INTEREST IN SERVING THE EMPEROR DOESN'T RING TRUE.
IT DOESN'T? OUR ADHER-ENCE TO THE SHOGUNATE IS OUR REVERENCE TO THE EMPEROR.
THAT MAY BE SO, BUT...
...TOSHI.
ISN'T THERE SOMETHING ELSE THAT YOU'RE REALLY WORRIED ABOUT?

...
IT'S SANNAN.
...THE FIRST SNOW WILL FALL.
SOON...

YEAH.
...WE'D BETTER TAKE CARE OF SOUJI'S COLD.
BEFORE THE TEMPER-ATURE DROPS...
YES.
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THE FAMOUS ISHIDA'S MEDICINE IS WORKING.
NO. HE'S BEEN SECRETLY THROWING IT AWAY.
HA HA HA HA!
I GUESS IT'S TOO BITTER, EH?
チリ…!

NINE, TEN...
ELE-VEN...
UH OH.
WE'RE TWO SHORT...
THERE ARE FIFTEEN OF THEM.
WHAT DO I DO?
Feh.
ARE YOU STILL SECRETLY EATING THE GOOD TEACAKES?
YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW.
...it was worth it!
Just a short wait, but...
OKITA-SAN WILL HAVE STOOD IN LINE AND BOUGHT THEM ALL OUT.
" ... " Weirdo.
NO CAN DO.
THEN RUN AND BUY REPLACE-MENTS, I'LL LEND YOU MONEY.
BLEH. NO WAY.
GO KILL YOUR-SELF.
NOT MY FAULT. THE VICE COMMANDER WHO COLLECTS THE FOOD IS DOING IT.

THEY WON'T BE NEEDING TEA.
ICHI-MURA.
AH... YAMA-ZAKI.
WHAT? THEY'RE DONE ALREADY?
NO.
CAN'T BE HELPED, I'LL GO BUY DIFFERENT ONES.
...I WOULDN'T GO IN THERE, IF I WERE YOU.
MORE TO THE POINT...
?!

Act 8
Snow

NOW THAT EVERY-ONE HAS GATHERED...
...I HAVE AN ANNOUN-CEMENT TO MAKE.

AS YOU ALL KNOW, THE SHOGUNATE ORDERED THE SUBJUGATION OF THE CHOUSHUU DOMAIN.
THE SUBJUGATION ARMY'S GOVERNOR-GENERAL, TOKUGAWA YOSHIKATSU-SAMA OF OSAKA, HAS FINALLY DEPARTED.
OUR INFOR-MATION BARELY EXCEEDS SPECULA-TION.
THE SHOGUNATE IS LOOKING TO THIS EXPEDITION INTO CHOUSHUU TO PERMANENTLY SUBDUE THEM.
OF COURSE, WE WILL ALSO PARTICIPATE IN THIS WAR.
BUT WITH OUR LIMITED EXPERIENCE OF POLITICAL STRATEGY, EVEN THOUGH WE ARE WARRIORS, OUR SPIRITS MAY FEEL TREPIDATION AT THIS WAR.
THAT IS WHY...

...IN FULL KNOWLEDGE OF THIS NEW CAMPAIGN WE HAVE DRAWN UP AN ORDINANCE.
WILL YOU ALL PLEASE READ THE DOCUMENT YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN.
...
...
...

Shinsengumi Code of Military Action

- We shall strictly protect the Government and abide by the orders of our leaders.
- We shall stop our enemies' criticisms without hesitation. Furthermore, talk of ghosts, apparitions, and other whimsy will not be tolerated...
- ...and luxurious foods are banned.
- No rebellious conversation will be allowed.
- If one of your comrades engages in a brawl or quarrel, separate yourself from him.
- When eating provisions with your unit, you will keep your weapon sheathed.
- If a group leader dies, the members of that group will commit themselves to fight to the death. If one should flee his group in cowardice, death by decapitation shall be the minimum punishment. We shall strive to be prepared, to be free of lingering attachments, and to do our work.
- After a heated battle, aside from the group leader, no other body is to be removed from the field, even in the case of a high death toll.

The Foreigner's Battle- In August of 1864, Great Britain, France, the United States of America and Holland all attacked Choushuu.

--OUR ENEMY USED WHEN THEY WERE BEATEN AT THE GATE OF HAMAGURI AND SHIMONOSEKI. IT'S THE SAME AS FORFEITING YOUR WILL TO FIGHT.
NO, I GET THAT PART...
ROTTEN AS THEY ARE, THIS IS STILL CHOUSHUU WE'RE UP AGAINST, AND WHO KNOWS WHAT THEY'LL DO WHEN THEIR BACKS ARE AT THE WALL.
...BUT WHAT, NO SWEET FOODS AND GHOST STORIES? THAT'S RIDICULOUS.
AND THAT IS THE SORT OF LIGHT-MINDED NONSENSE THEY USED--

"A CORNERED RAT WILL BITE A CAT," AS THEY SAY.
WE'RE PILING CAUTION UPON CAUTION NOW. WE CAN'T LET THIS GO WRONG.
YES, BUT--
REWRITING A CODE OF CONDUCT IS DRASTIC.
THERE IS ONE MORE THING.
HUUUH?!
There's still more?
IT RELATES TO OUR SHINSEN-GUMI BASE.
BEYOND JUST BEING CRAMPED ...
...IF A FIGHT BREAKS OUT AGAIN, WE CAN'T COUNT ON BEING ABLE TO SPREAD OUT IN FORMATION.
THAT'S WHY...

NISHI-HONGAN TEMPLE.
WE ARE PLANNING TO MOVE HERE.
NISHI-HONGAN TEMPLE? THAT'S HUGE.
HAVING A MILITARY BASE IN A TEMPLE?
I'M AGAINST THIS, HIJIKATA-KUN.
THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT SEPPUKU AND EXECUTIONS TO BE HELD ON THE COMPOUND GROUNDS!

THOSE MONKS HARBORED REMAINING ATTACKERS FROM HAMAGURI. ISN'T THIS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THEM REFLECT ON THAT CHOICE?
THAT RULE IS AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION.
"THOU SHALT NOT KILL"? HMM?
THE TAKING OF LIVES ON SACRED GROUND IS--
...
YOU CAN'T.
HEH HEH...
AS EXPECTED FROM SHINSEN-GUMI'S DEMON.

THE ENFORCER.
YOU REALLY DO KNOW HOW TO GET IT DONE.
WE WILL HEAR OPINIONS, BUT OBJECTIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.
THAT IS ALL. THIS MATTER IS DECIDED.

THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO COMPLAIN.
FROM NOW ON, CRITICISM OF FELLOW MEMBERS CONSTI-TUTES SLANDER.
ANY SPEECH ON CONDUCT AGAINST POLICY IS EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN.
THAT INCLUDES GROUP LEADERS.
YOU BREAK THESE RULES, YOU WILL COMMIT SEP-PUKU.

HAAAA...
AAAAH...
THE VICE COMMANDER WAS IN FINE FORM TODAY.
Right?
AND WE DID OUR BEST IMITATION OF ANGER.
THAT WAS HEART-BREAK-ING.
WHY ALL THE DRAMA?
AND YAMANAMI-SAN FELL RIGHT FOR IT.

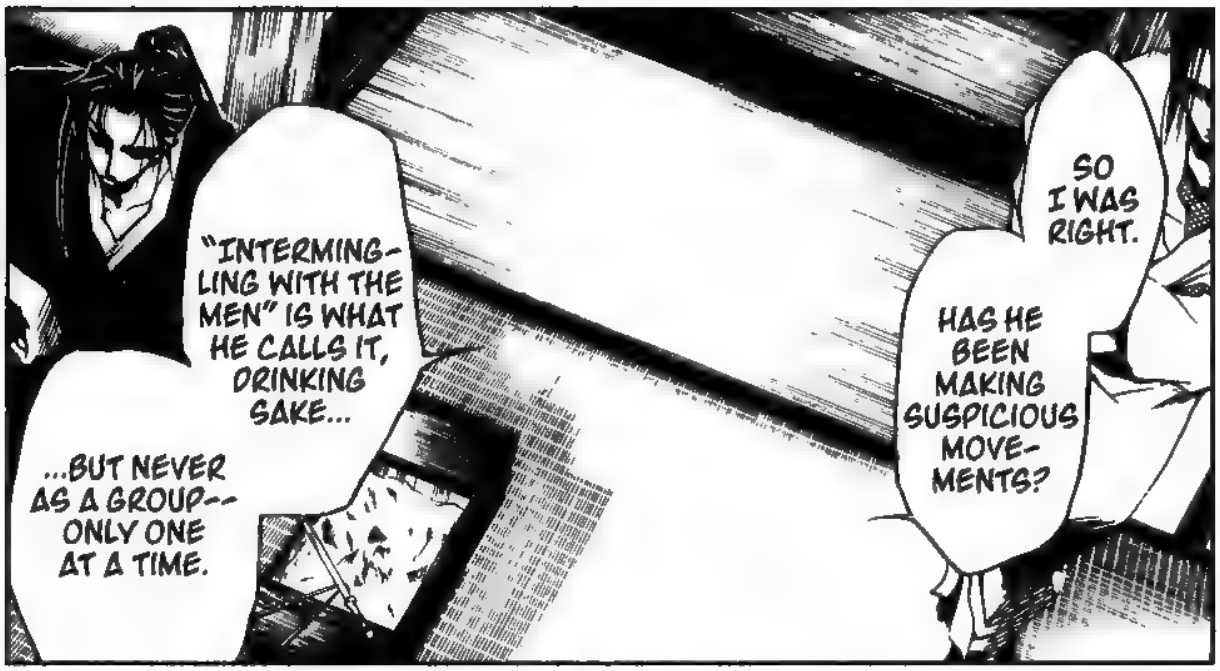
IT'LL START WITH ITOU AND HIS SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR.
"I WON'T LET KONDŌ'S GROUP LOSE SOLIDARITY."
THAT LAST BIT WAS A WARNING.
HEY.. SHINPAT-TSAN...
WHAT'D YOU MEAN BY "DRAMA" ...?
NOTHING.
NOTHING.

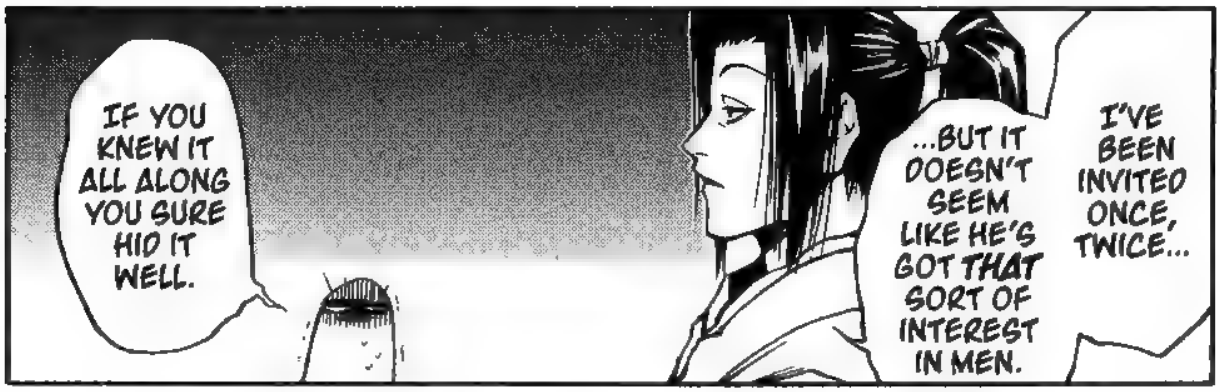
AAAAAH?!
WHAT'RE YOU HIDING, SHINPA-CHI?!
IF IT'S NOTHING, EXPLAIN IT!
TELL US, SHINPA-CHI!
BUT YOU KNOW...
AAAA-ARGH! YOU'RE HEAVY! YOU'RE GONNA CRUSH ME!
...ARE WE REALLY THAT UNTRUST-WORTHY?
ARE WE NOT BONDED TO EACH OTHER?

!
HUH?
AS ALWAYS, YOU HAVE ABOUT AS MUCH PRESENCE AS A NINJA.
HAVE I MISSED MY CALL-ING?

THIS IS WHERE YOU SPEND YOUR LEISURE HOUR?
WHAT HAP-PENED TO YOUR PATROL?
I'M OFF DUTY TODAY.
IS THAT SO?
STILL.
FEEL FREE TO COME BY MY ROOM LATER IF YOU HAVE TIME TO KILL.

HOW CONSIDERATE OF YOU.
...
...
ONLY A MAN WHO KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS ...
...CAN AFFORD TO SPEAK SO BOLDLY.
YOU MAY BE MISTAKEN.
ABOUT ITOU-DONO...


SO I WAS RIGHT.
HAS HE BEEN MAKING SUSPICIOUS MOVE-MENTS?
"INTERMING-LING WITH THE MEN" IS WHAT HE CALLS IT, DRINKING SAKE...
...BUT NEVER AS A GROUP-- ONLY ONE AT A TIME.

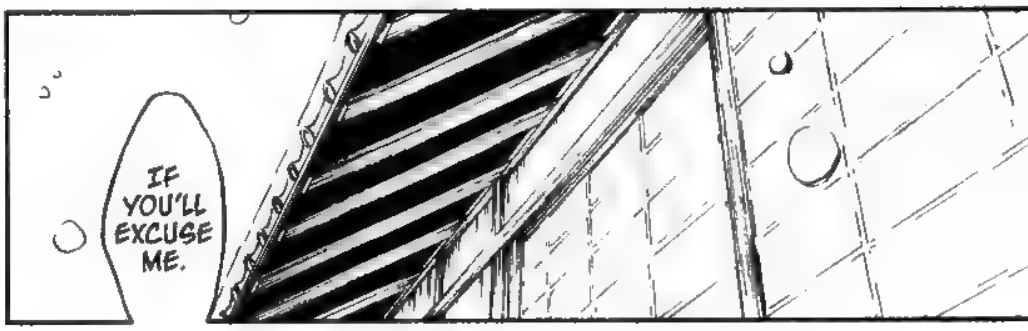

I'VE BEEN INVITED ONCE, TWICE...
...BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HE'S GOT *THAT* SORT OF INTEREST IN MEN.
IF YOU KNEW IT ALL ALONG YOU SURE HID IT WELL.

SO WHAT HAP-PENED?
CAN YOU SEE HIS MOTIVES FROM WHERE YOU SIT?
NO.
THIS IS INTERPRE-TATION. SPECULA-TION.
HUH.

WE'RE AFRAID TO TRANSFER OVER TO THE "ITOU GROUP."
...
HEH.
HEH HEH...

DON'T PLAY STUPID.
NOT TO ME.

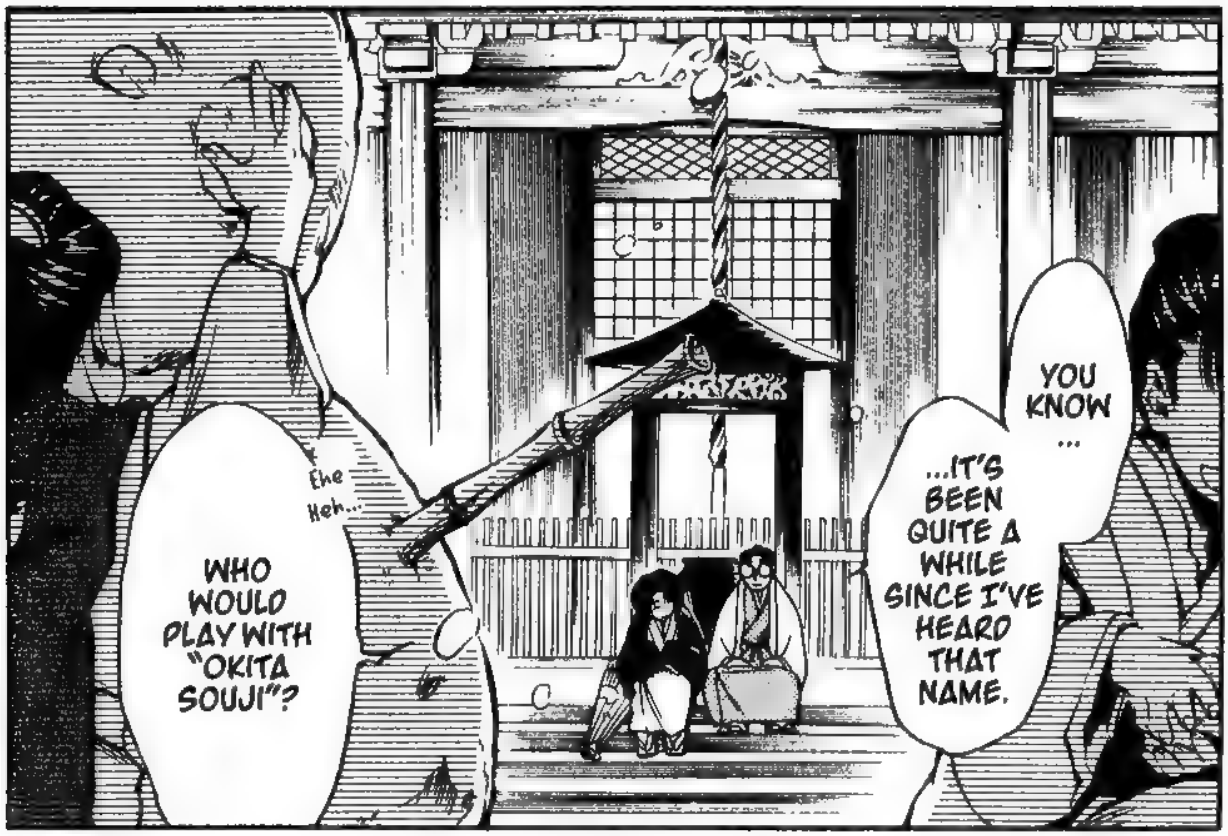
NONE OF YOU--


IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.

KYAA?
AHA HA HA!
IT'S COLD!
ABOUT THIS BIG?
YUP! THAT'S GOOD.
ALL RIGHT!
UH OH!
LOOKS LIKE I CAN'T--

HA HA HA. THIS AGAIN?
COME HELP US OUT!
PLEASE!
YAMANAMI-SAN!
YOU'VE GOT A BIG ONE THIS TIME, OKITA-KUN!
AND HEAVE HO!
OKAY, WAIT RIGHT THERE.

Heh heh!
I WANNA MAKE A PRINCESS.
A SAMU-RAI!
EEEH?
STUPID, WE'RE NOT DONE YET!
A SAMU-RAI!
LET'S PUT A KATANA AND TOP-KNOT ON!
It's Done!
HMM? THAT IS A TOUGHIE.
HEY, SOUJI-ROU! A SAMURAI IS COOLER, RIGHT!
THEY HAVE PRETTY FACES, HMM?
HOW ABOUT A PRIN-CESS?
HMMM.


YOU KNOW ...
...IT'S BEEN QUITE A WHILE SINCE I'VE HEARD THAT NAME.
Ehe Heh...
WHO WOULD PLAY WITH "OKITA SOUJI"?

HA!
SO THAT'S IT?
THEY WOULDN'T PLAY WITH YOU?
AH!
NO, I MEAN I WOULDN'T PLAY WITH THEM!

WHEN I FIRST MET YOU...
...YOU WERE THEIR AGE.

HAAAA...
NOT NEARLY AS CUTE, THOUGH.
IT'S CHILLY.
THE YEAR IS ALREADY ENDING.
A YEAR PASSES IN AN INSTANT.
TIME PASSES ESPECIALLY QUICKLY IN THE CAPITAL.
LAST YEAR WE DIDN'T HAVE A MOMENT TO BREATHE.
THIS YEAR WAS WORSE.
IF THIS KEEPS UP WE'LL BE OLD MEN BY NEXT YEAR.

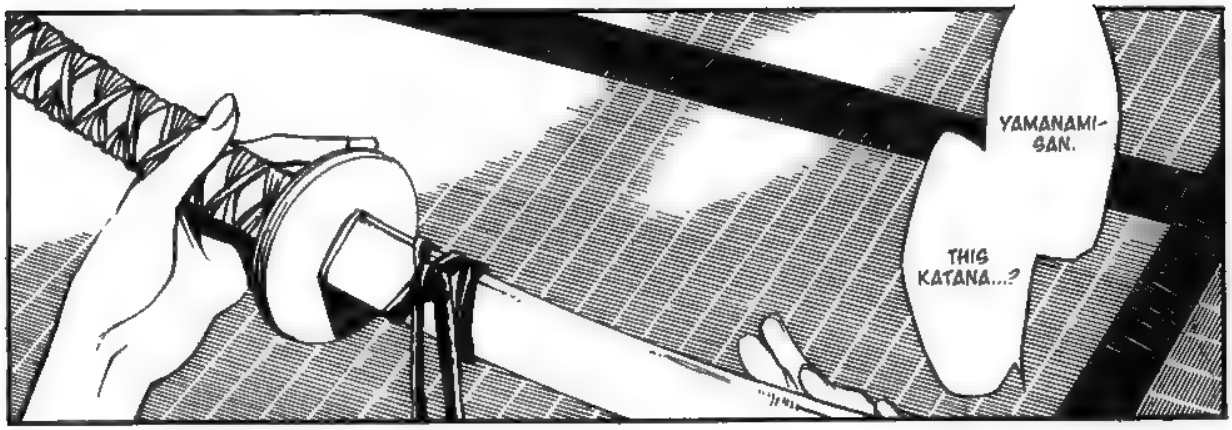
PEOPLE WHO WILL CHANGE, CHANGE.
EVEN IF IT'S ONLY BEEN ONE YEAR.
ABOUT THIS AFTER-NOON'S TALK.
ハッ!!

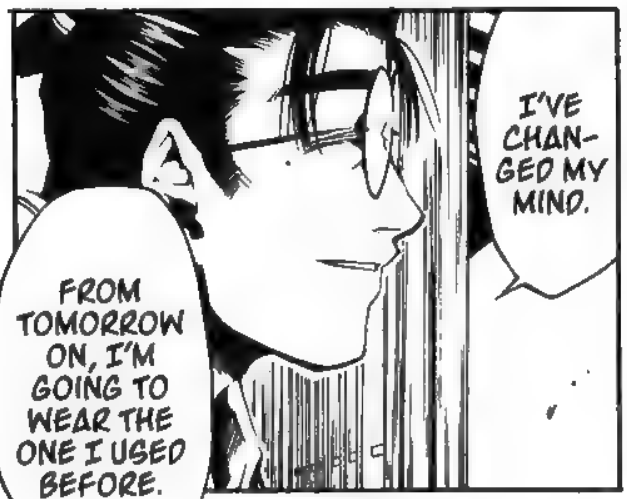
IS THAT IT?
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
DO YOU THINK WHAT HIJIKATA-SAN SAID IS RIGHT?
YAMANAMI'S WAYS ARE ALWAYS MUCH MORE RIGHT.
YOUR MIND IS OBSESSED WITH RIGHT AND WRONG.

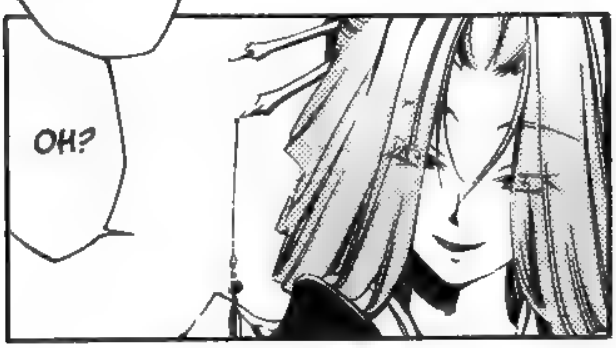
IDIOT. I DIDN'T SAY IT WAS A BAD THING.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO PREACH. I'M SORRY.
THE ENDS ALWAYS JUSTIFY THE MEANS.
TO ME, RESULTS ARE EVERYTHING.
IT'S JUST... RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE CAN NEVER GET THINGS DONE.
...THAT ACTION IS OFTEN DIVORCED FROM THEIR FEELINGS.
IT'S TRUE. YOU'RE VERY GOOD AT SPURRING MEN TO ACTION.
BUT...

YAMANAMI-SAN!
IS IT NOT?
YES.
I'M GOING TO TAKE THESE CHILDREN HOME, OKAY?
WHERE DID YOU GO JUST THEN?
Heh heh!
Ha!
?!
AH! WHAT IS IT?

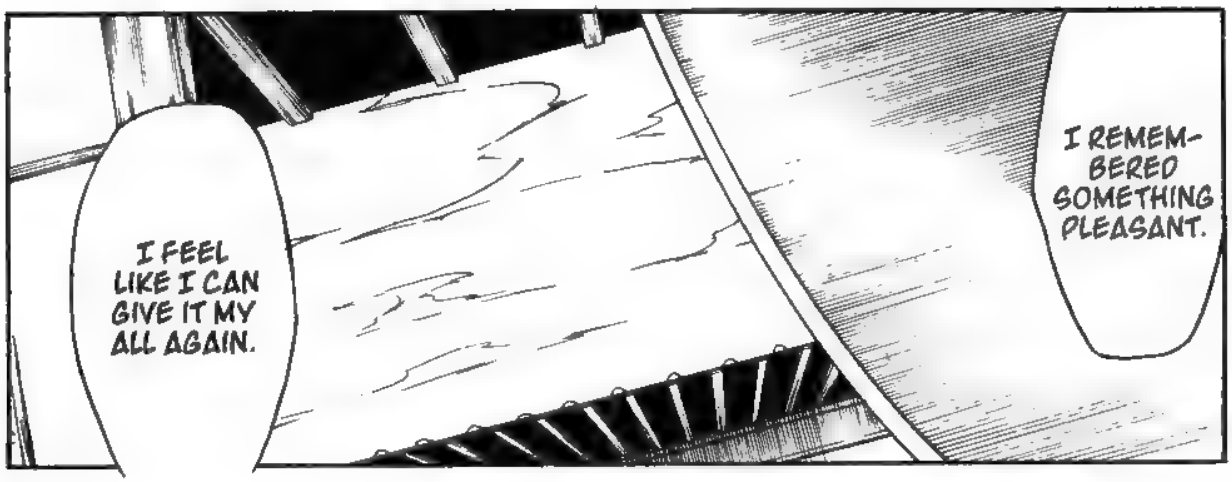
NYA...

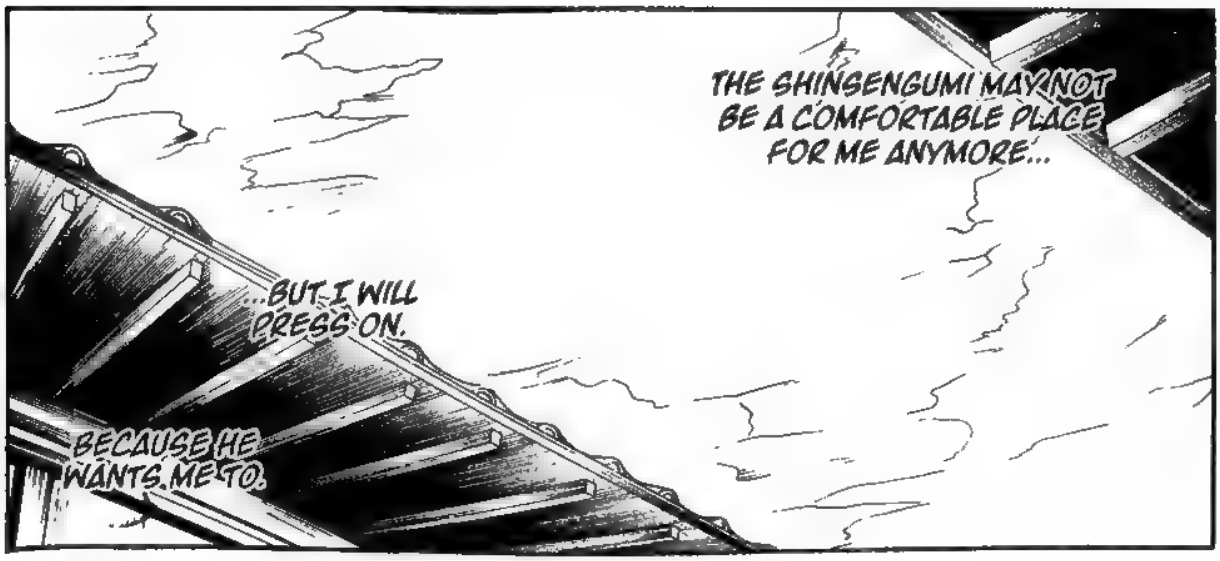

YAMANAMI-SAN.
THIS KATANA...?


I'VE CHANGED MY MIND.
FROM TOMORROW ON, I'M GOING TO WEAR THE ONE I USED BEFORE.

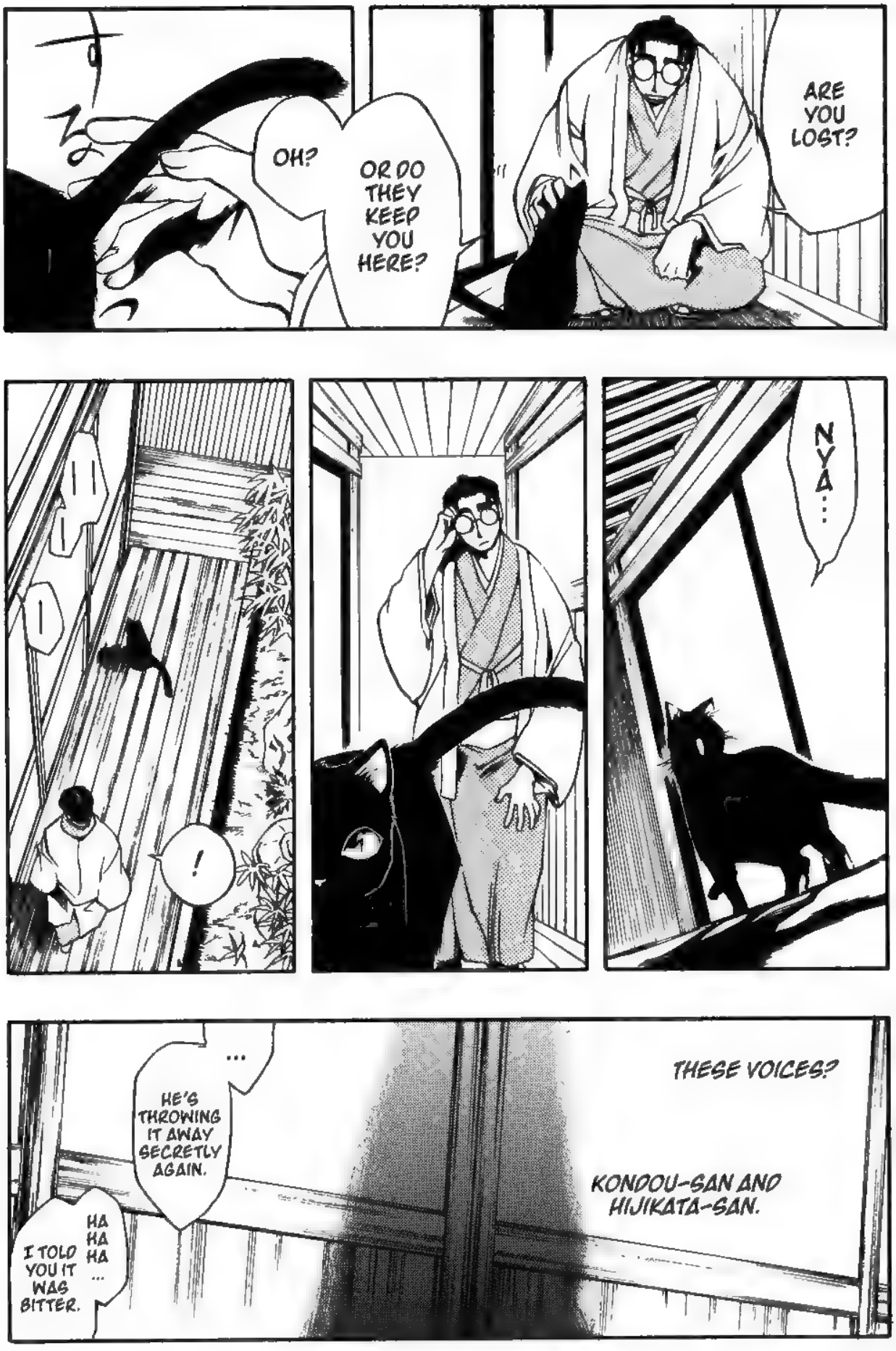

OH?

OH, THAT?
ISN'T IT PITIFUL?


I REMEMBERED SOMETHING PLEASANT.
I FEEL LIKE I CAN GIVE IT MY ALL AGAIN.


THE SHINSENGUMI MAY NOT BE A COMFORTABLE PLACE FOR ME ANYMORE...
...BUT I WILL PRESS ON.
BECAUSE HE WANTS ME TO.

NYA...
...HM?
NYA?


ARE YOU LOST?
OH?
OR DO THEY KEEP YOU HERE?
NYA...
!
THESE VOICES?
KONDOU-SAN AND HIJIKATA-SAN.
...
HE'S THROWING IT AWAY SECRETLY AGAIN.
HA HA HA ...
I TOLD YOU IT WAS BITTER.

AH.
SANNAN?
HEY --
HE'S GOTTEN A WHOLE DAMN LOT MORE ANNOYING.
SO THOSE TWO CAME?
WE'LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH HIM SOON.

SNIFF
DING-
DING...
YOU'RE GOING ALREADY?

NO --
WORKING FOR THE SHINSEN-GUMI IS TERRIBLE.
I'M SORRY, I'VE JUST REMEM-BERED SOME URGENT BUSINESS.
YAMA-NAMI-SAN?
WHAT'S HAP-PENED?
NOTH-ING.

...YAMANAMI KEISUKE WENT MISSING.

YOU DON'T KNOW FOR SURE THAT HE DESERTED, YOU DAMN BASTARD!
OW! OW!
I'M JUST SAYING, "IF." IF!!
NO "IF'S"!
JERK! IDIOT! STUPID RETARD!
WHAT?!
HE'S BEEN GONE FOR THREE DAYS.

第九話 Act-9 Voices

SAY, KONDOU-SAN, WE DON'T NEED A SEARCH SQUAD.
WILL YOU BE QUIET? SOLDIERS SHOULD KNOW THIS!
HE HIKES AND WANDERS. DOESN'T HE HAVE FAVORITE RETREAT SPOTS?
HE'LL COME HOME TODAY OR TOMORROW, AFTER HIS WALK.

IF NOT, I MEAN...HE WOULDN'T LEAVE US. HE WOULDN'T--
WOULD HE ANNOUNCE IT?

...
IF HE WERE LEAVING FOR NO REASON?
WOULD HE SAY SO?

WE CAN ASK THE GENERAL INSPECTOR'S OFFICE TO COVER THE SURROUND-ING AREA AND GATHER INFOR-MATION.
YES.
I DON'T KNOW IF HE RAN AWAY OR GOT KILLED ...
...BUT EITHER WAY WE NEED TO FIND HIM.
IN ANY CASE ...
... EVERY-ONE ...

...RIGHT NOW, SANNÁN ...
...MUST BE CONSIDERED AN ENEMY.
FWIP
SHIVER

AH, SAYA!
...

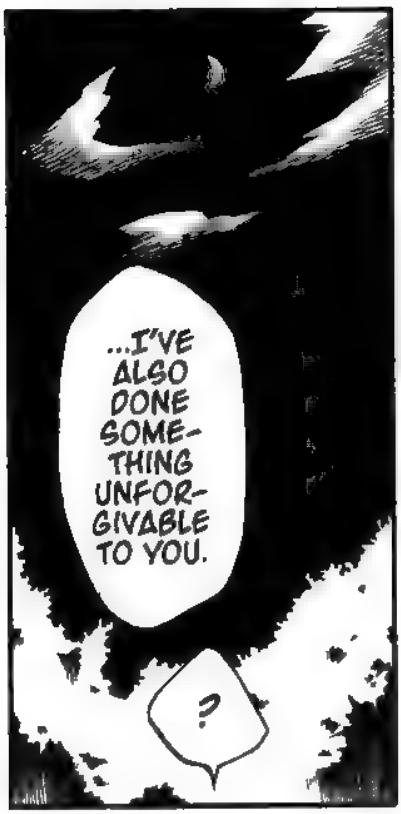
A LETTER.
I WAS TOLD TO GIVE IT TO AKESATO-NEEHAN...
IT'S FROM THAT PERSON WHO'S ALWAYS COMING BY.
キ!!...

AKE-
SATO.
I'M
DOWN
HERE.
AKE-
SATO.

I'M SORRY...
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, YAMANAMI-HAN!
I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD APOLOGIZE!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
...FOR CALLING YOU SO FAR OUT.
YES.
WON'T THEY MAKE YOU COMMIT SEPPUKU IF THEY FIND YOU...?!
SHIN-SENGUMI MEMBERS HAVE COME AROUND, LOOKING FOR YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

BUT ALL ROADS...
...LEAD TO MY DEATH.

I CANNOT ESCAPE IT.
NO!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO THE SHINSEN-GUMI?!


...I'VE ALSO DONE SOME-THING UNFOR-GIVABLE TO YOU.
?

WHAT COULD BE SO BAD THAT THEY HAVE TO KILL YOU....?!
IT'S TRUE.
AND...

I'D HAVE LIKED TO AT LEAST BEEN OF HELP TO YOU.
YOU'D FINALLY CAUGHT A SHIN-SENGUMI SOLDIER...
...A LEADER EVEN, BUT ONE WITHOUT ANY WORTHWHILE INFOR-MATION.
!!
LET GO! WE'RE NOT--
!!!
AND EVEN THEN...

...YOU REALLY DID LOVE ME.
...
NGGH?
SNIFF... NNN...

YOUR HAIR AND EYES ARE A STRIKING COLOR.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT SO.
IT ALWAYS SEEMED A SHAME TO HIDE THEM.
WAS IT HARD LIVING LIKE THIS?
YES. YES IT WAS.

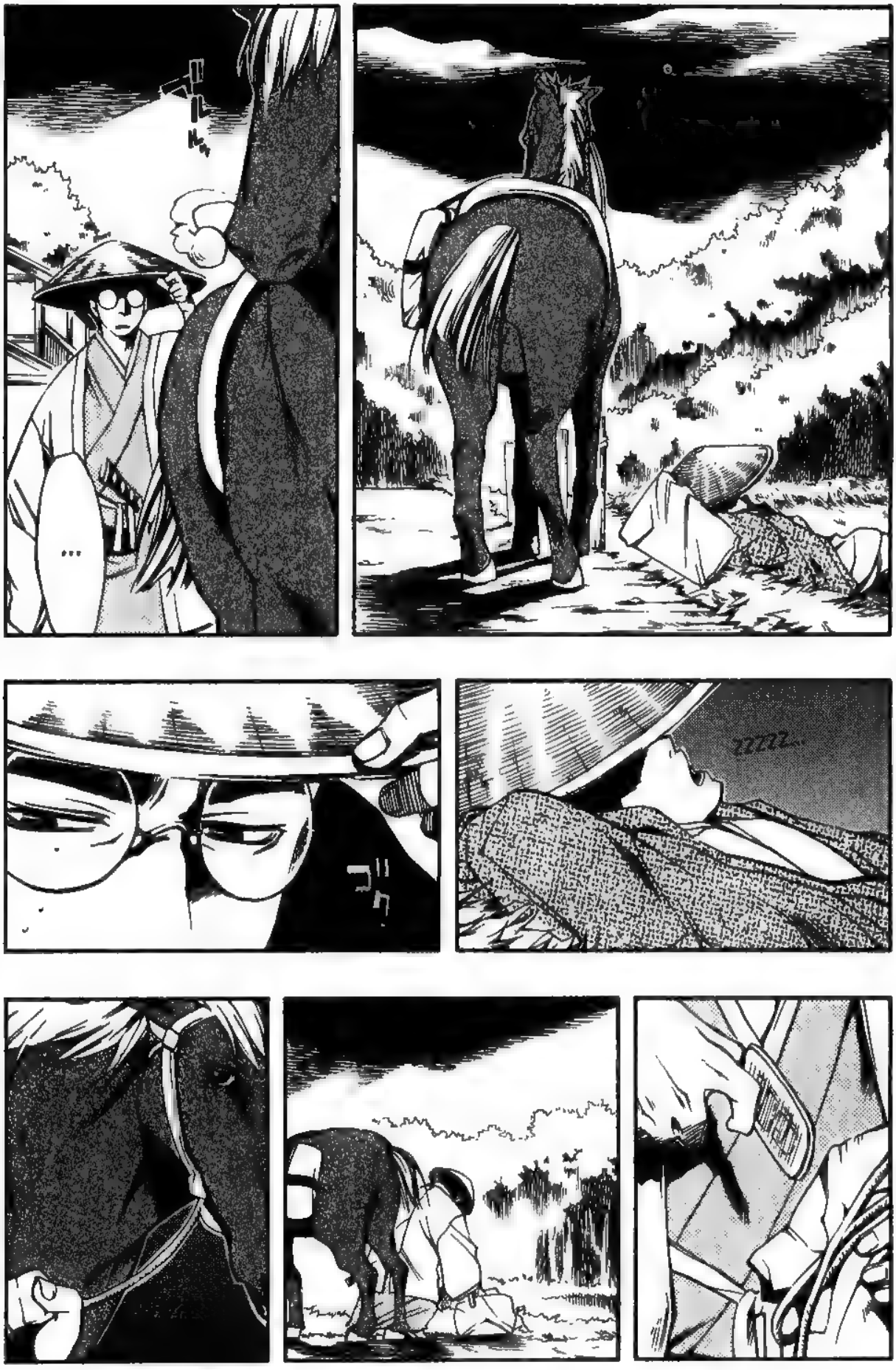
!
...UNCON-VINCING.
PEFT!
YOUR KYOTO ACCENT WAS...
I ALSO DON'T MIND THE WAY YOU SPEAK.
HEE HEE...
AHA HA HA HA HA!
UWA!
OOH!
OH, MY...
...I AM.
HOW UNDIG-NIFIED ...

I'M A NINJA. I KNOW A SECRET WAY THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS.
OF COURSE THE CHECK-POINTS ARE NO PROBLEM.
IF WE FOLLOW THIS MOUNTAIN PATH, WE CAN LOSE ALL OUR PURSUERS.
.... HEY ...
WILL YOU COME WITH ME?
HEY, YAMANAMI-SAN...
...DO YOU LOVE ME?
I'M AN AMAZING WOMAN, YOU KNOW.
I CAN LIE, USE MY SEX APPEAL TO DO ANYTHING I WANT.
A GOOD-NATURED PERSON LIKE YOU ...
...IS NO PROBLEM --
I... I'M THE WORST. THE WORST.

HEY...
...DO YOU LOVE ME...?
NO MATTER WHAT YOU MAY BE.
LET'S LIVE TO-GETHER.

IF YOU'RE WITH ME...
...I CAN KEEP ON LIVING.
YAMA-NAMI-SAN.

HIDE YOURSELF UNTIL THREE IN THE MORNING.
I WILL PREPARE OUR JOURNEY, AND WAIT FOR YOU AT THE PLACE MARKED FOR THE HOUR OF THE TIGER.
I WILL BE THERE.
BELIEVE IN ME.
MANSAI...


...
zzzz...

REMOVE YOUR HAND.
THE INSPECTORS ARE OUT SEARCHING FOR YOU.
IF YOU TAKE THAT HORSE PAST THE BORDERS OF THIS CAPITAL ...
...YOU WILL NOT ESCAPE SEPPUKU.

AKEGATO...

WE'LL HAVE TO GET BY SOMEHOW ON THIS.
NO.
WE WILL GET BY ON THIS.
KLACK
THE SHOPS ARE CLOSED.
I COULDN'T PREPARE MOST OF WHAT WE NEED.

YAMA-NAMI-SAN.
AKE-SATO.
I'M OVER HERE, AKE-SATO..
YAMA-NAMI-SAN.
WHERE?
WHERE ARE YOU?
I'M HERE.
I'M HERE, AKE-SATO.

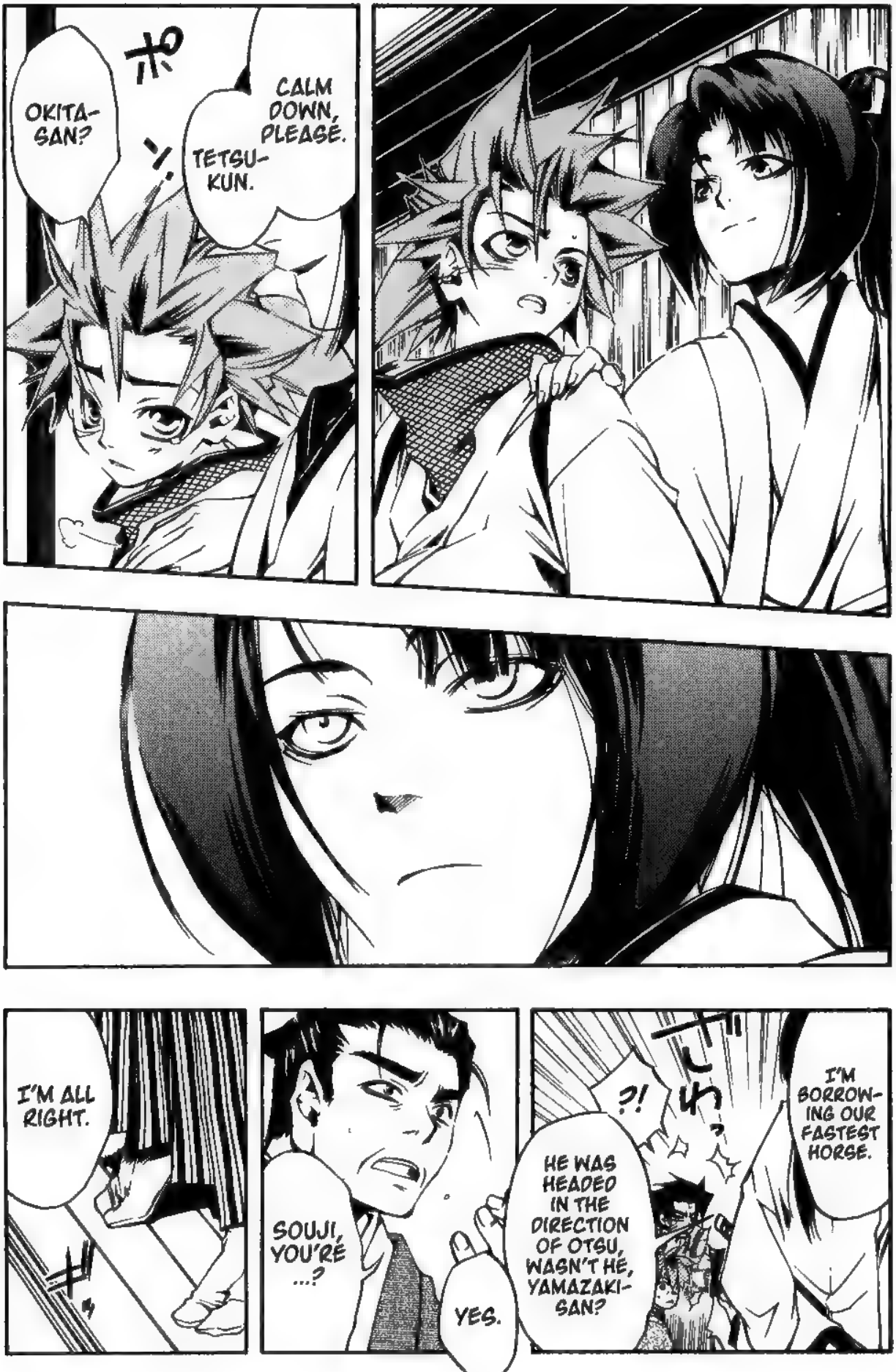
I KNOW I TOLD YOU TO HIDE, BUT--
NOW LOOK HERE, SIR!
I'M RIGHT HERE...
...AKE-SATO.
パラ
パラ
パラ

SECOND YEAR OF GENJI, 1865; FEBRUARY 21ST. YAMANAMI KEISUKE LEFT THE SHINSENGUMI.
YAMANAMI-SAAAN!

SAY, YAMANAMI-SAN?
WHY DID YOU JOIN THE ROUSHI-GUMI?
EH?
WHY...?
DON'T ASK SUCH DIFFICULT QUES-TIONS, OKITA-KUN.
YES, BUT...
YAMANAMI-SAN, YOU DON'T REALLY ADMIRE WARRIORS, RIGHT?
DON'T GO SAYING THINGS LIKE THAT!
MY REASON DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A REASON.
...I WANTED TO GO OUT...
JUST BECAUSE ...

Act 10
Rope

NO WAY.
YAMANAMI-SAN WOULDN'T... HE WOULDN'T...
I MEAN... HE JUST WENT OUT ON ERRANDS... EVERYBODY...
TETSU-KUN...
SUSUMU, YOU BASTARD! IT'S CAUSE YOU SAID ALL THAT NONSENSE!
VICE COMMAND-ER, DON'T BELIEVE HIM!
HE'S PRETTY SCATTER-BRAINED, SO...
...HE COULD'VE THOUGHT HE SAW HIM!
SO YAMANAMI-SAN HASN'T DESERTED!


OKITA-SAN?
CALM DOWN, PLEASE.
TETSU-KUN.
I'M ALL RIGHT.
SOUJI, YOU'RE ...?
YES.
HE WAS HEADED IN THE DIRECTION OF OTSU, WASN'T HE, YAMAZAKI-SAN?
?!
I'M BORROW-ING OUR FASTEST HORSE.

DEFINI-
TELY.
I'LL
BRING
HIM
BACK.

SOUJI.
THAT NEIGHBORHOOD IS CROWDED AT THIS HOUR.
...BUT HE COULD EASILY SWITCH HORSES OR DISSOLVE INTO THE CROWD ON FOOT. IF HE PASSES OTSU, YOU HAVE NO CHANCE OF FINDING HIM.
WITHOUT A VERY FAST HORSE HE WON'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR...
IF YOU CAN'T FIND HIM TONIGHT, JUST COME BACK.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, SOUJI?

ドカッ
ドカッ
ドカッ
ドカッ
ドカッ
ドカッ

YAMA-
NAMI-
SAN.
SO
THEY'VE
SENT
YOU.
THAT
MAKES
SENSE.
YOU CAN
OUT-
DRAW ME.
SO MY
CHANCES
OF
WINNING
WOULD
BE--
I'M NOT
HERE ON
ORDERS.
I CAME
ON MY
OWN.

BECAUSE IF IT'S ME, NO MATTER HOW FAR YOU'D GONE...
...HOW WELL YOU'D HIDDEN YOURSELF AMONG OTHERS ...
...I'D FIND YOU. THAT'S WHY I CAME.

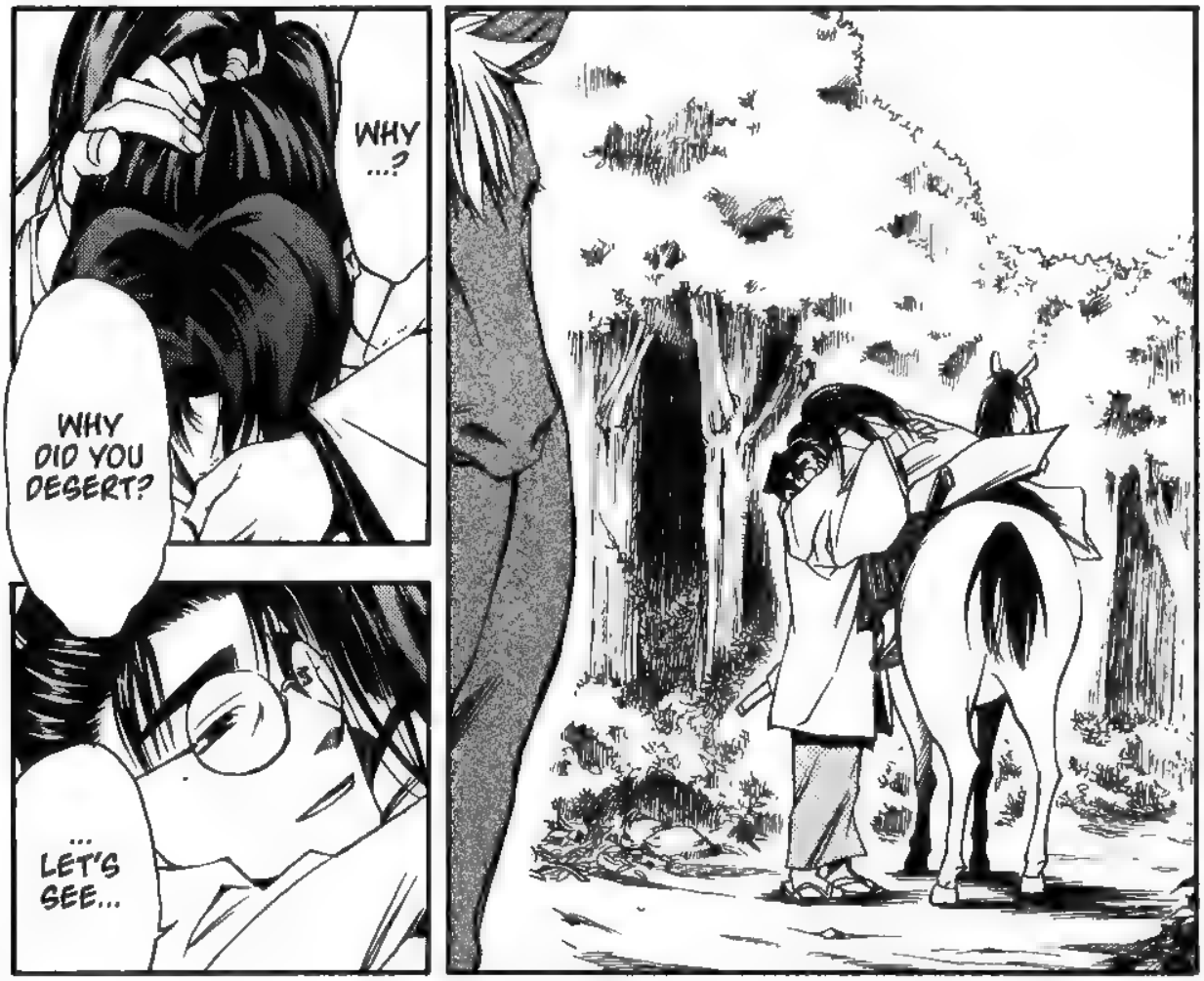
I'M SORRY TO HAVE CAUSED YOU SO MUCH TROU-BLE.
SHALL WE GO?
I'M PREPARED TO TAKE MY PUNISH-MENT.

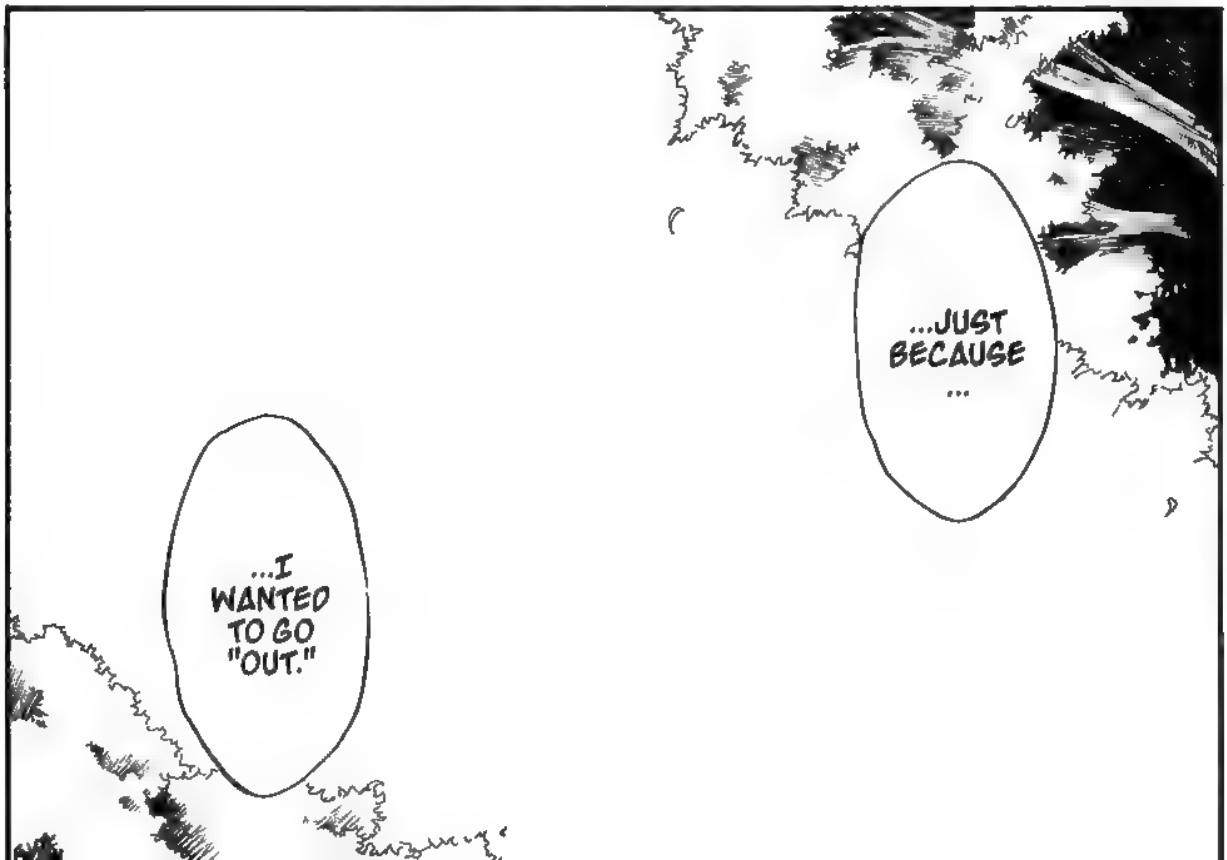
THAT'S FINE.

I SEE.

LET'S GO BACK.
YOU HAVE ...
...ONE LAST THING YOU CAN DO FOR THE SHINSEN-GUMI.
...OKITA-KUN...
WHAT-EVER REASON YOU MAY HAVE...
...I WILL NOT ACCEPT IT THIS TIME.
NO MATTER WHAT FACE HE MAKES...
... HIJIKATA-SAN KNOWS VERY WELL THAT HE NEEDS YOU
OKITA-KUN--
AND YOU KNOW THAT EVERYONE IN THE GROUP NEEDS YOU!
... THIS ...
THAT IS...

I DON'T WANT IT TO END WITH YOU JUST SLICING YOUR STOMACH OPEN!
IF YOU JUST GIVE SOME GOOD REASON WHY YOU LEFT...
...I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU SAY...
...IF I EARNESTLY REQUEST IT...
...EVEN A DEMOTION IS OKAY.
JUST KEEP LIVING!
OKITA-KUN...
...IT'S ALL RIGHT.
THANK YOU.
I'M SO SORRY ...


WHY ...?
WHY DID YOU DESERT?
... LET'S SEE...


...JUST BECAUSE ...
...I WANTED TO GO "OUT."

DA! DA! DA! DA
HE'S HERE! HE REALLY CAME BACK!
YAMANAMI-SAN!
WHERE'D YOU GO OFF TO?!
EVERY-BODY WAS WOR-RIED!
YAMA-NAMI-SAN!
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING, YAMANAMI-SAN?!
WHY! WHY'D YOU GO?
I'M SO SORRY, EVERY-ONE...
I'M SORRY.

I GOT IT.
LOOKS LIKE A BIG REUNION.
DON'T GET IN THE WAY.
...
HOLD ON TO THOSE FEEL-INGS TIGHTLY.
IT'D BE BETTER IF YOU STAYED CLEAR OF THE VICE COMMANDER'S ROOM.
YOU OUGHT TO TAKE A BREAK FROM PAGE DUTY FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS.

...
WHY, YAMA-NAMI?
WHY ...
WELL, THEN.
...
WHY WOULD YOU DESERT US?
WHAT WERE YOU..

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD LOOK TO YOUR OWN HEARTS FOR THE REASON, DIRECTOR... VICE COMMANDER.
?!
WHAT ..?!
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS, SANNAN ...?!
ARE YOU SAYING ...
...THAT WE WERE GOING TO DRIVE YOU OUT?
ARE YOU SERI-OUS?
YOU REALLY THOUGHT THAT?
"DRIVE YOU OUT?" NO.
YOU THOUGHT I WAS IN THE WAY, AND IN THE END, I SHOULD BE DEALT WITH.
I'M CERTAIN THAT'S HOW IT--

NEVER HEARD SOMETHING SO RIDICULOUS...
...IN THE WAY?!
YOU.
I'M CERTAIN THE VOICES THEN WERE THOSE TWO.
THEN WHY ARE THEY MAKING THOSE FACES?
BUT, I'VE JUST...
...HAVE I BEEN TOO HASTY ...?

...I CAN'T CHANGE THE RESULT OF MY ACTIONS.
IN ANY CASE...

TODAY'S TALK WILL BE SUP-PRESSED.
ONLY SEVEN VETERANS IN THE UNIT ARE AWARE OF IT.

WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING?
ITOU-OONO AND THE REST OF THE GROUP HAVEN'T SEEN ANY OF THIS.

SO. NOW...

...

AFTER THAT ARE SAITOU AND TETSUNOSUKE-KUN, AND THE INSPECTORS WHO SEARCHED FOR YOU.

PLEASE TELL EVERYONE AS SWIFTLY AS POSSIBLE ...
...OF VICE COMMANDER YAMANAMI KEISUKE'S CRIME OF DESERTING THE SHINSEN-GUMI.
AND OF HIS DEATH BY SEPPUKU.

...
...

KILL
KILL
KILL

THIS IS THE SPIRIT OF YOUR ANCIENT WARRIOR SOUL.
AT LEAST USE THIS AT THE LAST...

...AND CUT YOUR STOMACH AS A SAMURAI.

... HIJI-KATA-KUN?
... TODAY IS... ...THE TWENTY-THIRD OF FEB-RUARY, ISN'T IT ...
THE DAY WE, AS ROUSHI-GUMI MEM-BERS ...
...FIRST SET FOOT IN THE CAPITAL.
...GIVE BIRTH TO RIGHTEOUS-NESS.
LET WHAT HAP-PENS FROM NOW...
I SHALL COMMEMO-RATE THIS DAY.

TO--
SHI...

BEHOLD!
YOUR REFLEXES AND SPEED TRULY ARE SUPERB.
...
HEH.
...

...
Haa ah...
Hff...
THOSE WHO BARE THEIR FANGS AT YOU...
...YOU CUT THEM DOWN WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION, AND CAST THEM ASIDE.
...EVEN IF THEY ARE YOUR COMRADES...
clatter
スル...
...OF YOUR TRAINING.
THIS IS THE GIFT...

BAMBOO
...
カラン...
...
SWORD
...?
GUH!
AH...
AH...
NGGH!
よろ

...FOR-
GOTTEN
ALREADY...
YOU'VE
...
...
PROB-
ABLY
...

...WHAT
YOU...
WANTED
FROM
ME...
...ON
THE...
GROUND...
AT HINO...
COUGH...
...
LONG
AGO
...

PLEASE...
REGRET
THIS...

I'M
SORRY.
I'M
SORRY,
HIJIKATA-
KUN.
NGGH!!
I...
...
WAS SO
USELESS
...

I'VE AL-READY ...
...BECOME A SYMBOL OF HATRED TO YOU. I COULDN'T STOP YOU.
SO PLEASE... REGRET... FROM NOW...
HAAH ...
PLEASE DON'T...
... REGRET ...
TOO--
!!

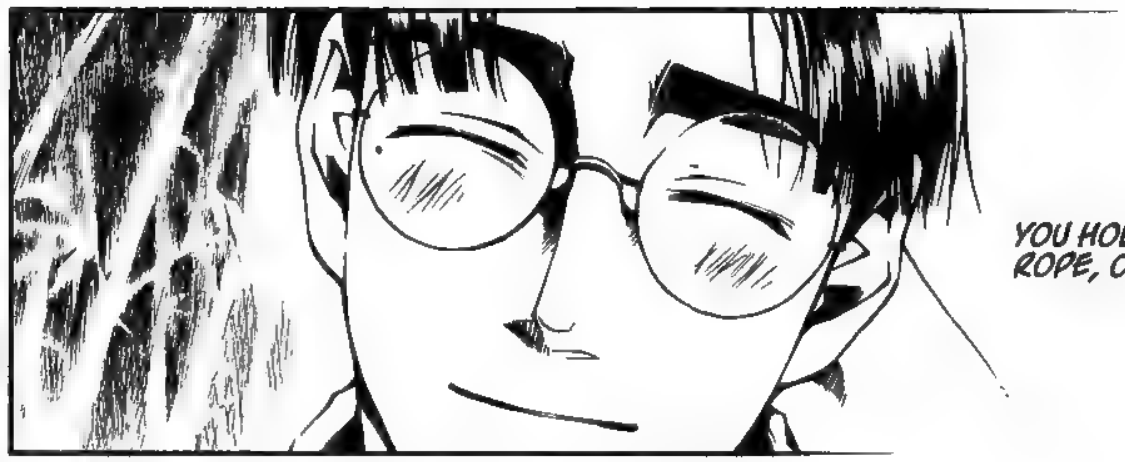
SECOND...
...PLEASE BE HIS SECOND... SOUJI...
I UNDERSTAND, IT'S OKAY, SANNAN!!
IT'S ALL RIGHT...!
ポタ...
...
THANK YOU...
...OKITA-KUN...

IT...
IT HURTS ...
...

HEY, YAMANAMI-SAN.

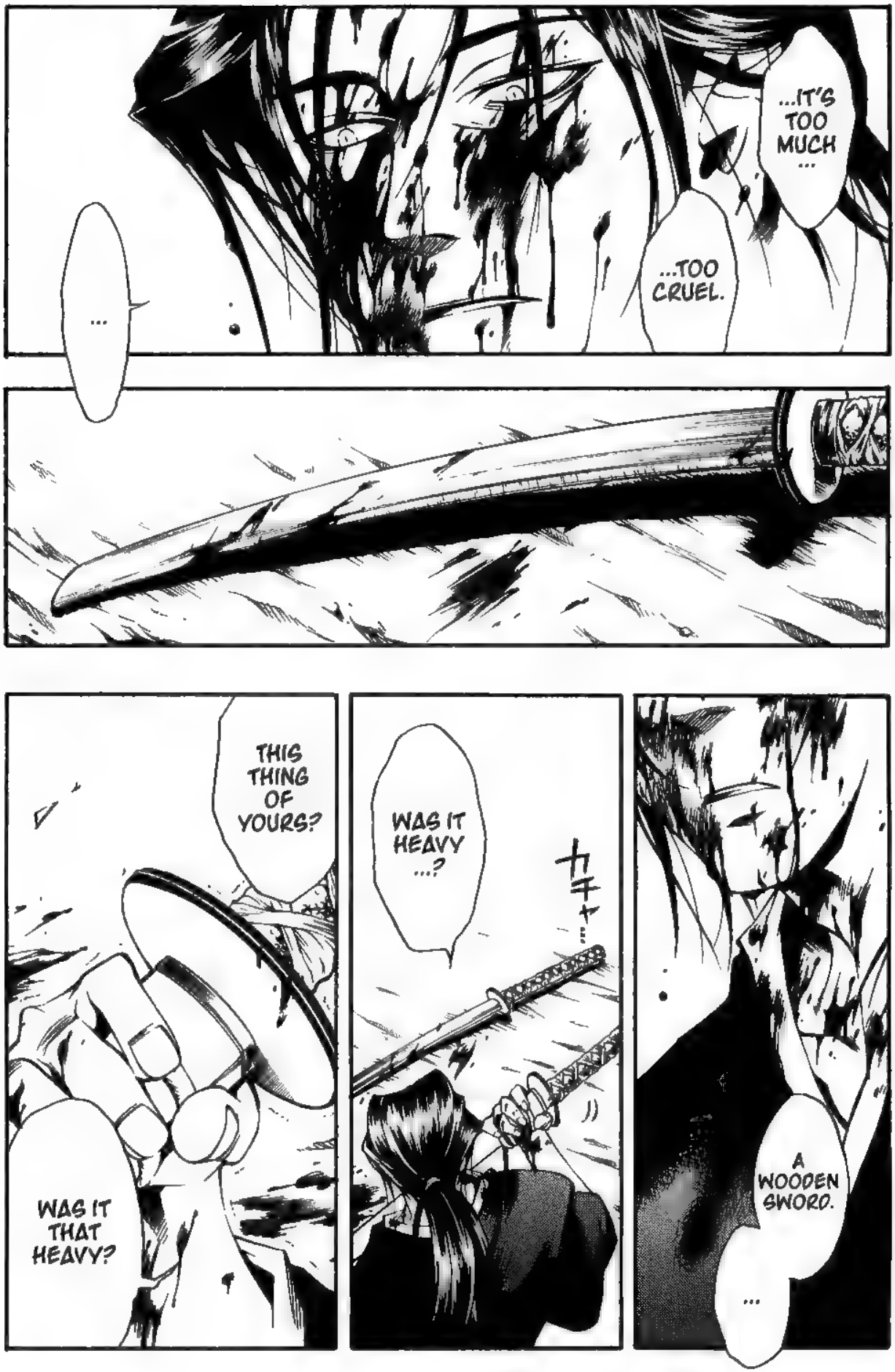
WILL YOU...
...HOLD MY ROPE?
YEAH, MY "ROPE OF RIGHT."
...SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
...?
ROPE?
...?
"ROPE OF HUMANITY"?
IS THAT IT?
I TOLD YOU EARLIER I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYTHING BUT RESULTS.
IF I GO TO THE CAPITAL AND JOIN THE ROUSHI-GUMI...
...I'LL PROBABLY DO ANYTHING TO GET PROMOTED.

"HEY, LOOK AT ME, I'VE COME THIS FAR!"
AND THEN I LOOK BEHIND ME.
BUT REALLY...
...RIGHT BEFORE I REACH MY GOAL, I CRY...
HAVING RE-GRETS ...
...I HATE THAT MORE THAN ANYTHING.
SO WHEN I WIN, I DON'T HAVE ANY DOUBTS AT ALL.
NO REGRETS.
SO I DON'T GET TOO FAR OFF COURSE. STEER ME BACK.
SO YOU BE MY ROPE OF RIGHT.


YOU HOLD MY ROPE, OKAY?

ズズッ…!
TOSHI…
PLEASE WASH THE BODY.

SANNAN, LIKE A TRUE WARRIOR, WENT OUT WITH SEPPUKU.
AND YET, THIS...

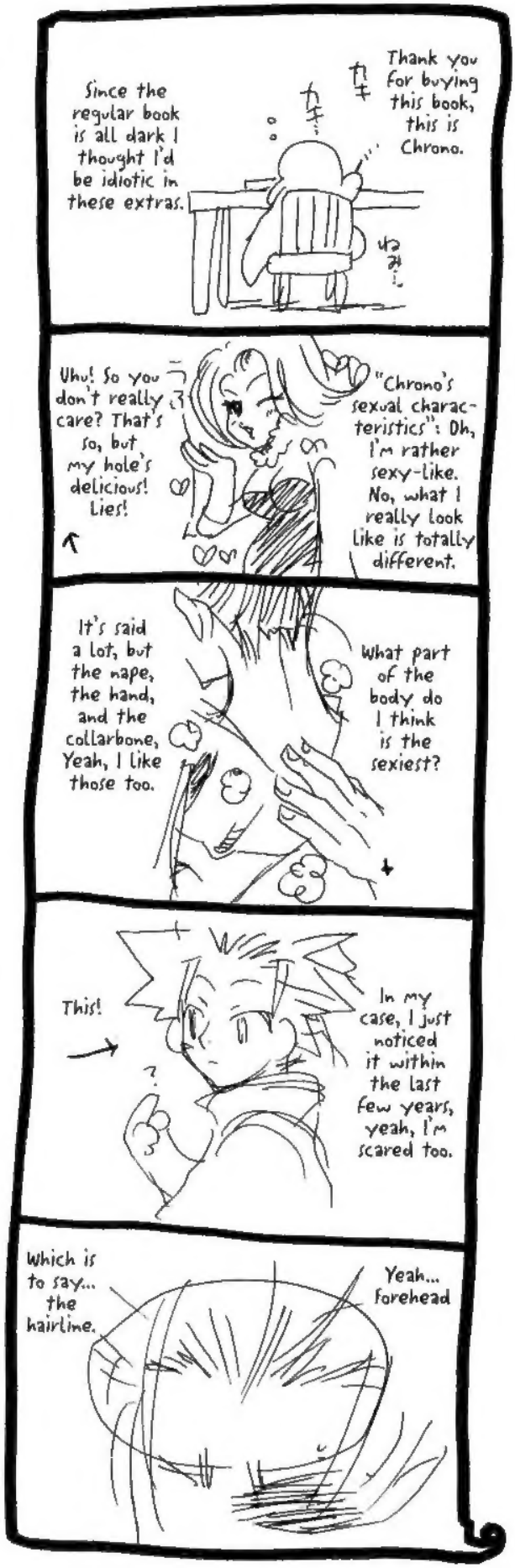

...IT'S TOO MUCH ...
...TOO CRUEL.
...
THIS THING OF YOURS?
WAS IT THAT HEAVY?
WAS IT HEAVY ...?
カチャ
A WOODEN SWORD.
...

HE WAS THREE AND THIRTY YEARS OF AGE.

YAMANAMI KEISUKE PASSED AWAY IN THE FIRST YEAR OF KEIOU, 1865, ON THE 23RD OF FEBRUARY.

Peace Maker Kurogane 2 End

This is so sexy, ha ha! I've never heard of something like a 'Hairline' fetish... I'm scary...
Celebrating hair all pulled back, times like that when the hairline is visible. Samurai do it, yeah.
It's true! Everybody, let's look for our common manga likes! Discover a you you never knew.
The special 4 forehead heroes
Come to think of it, the manga characters I've fallen for have had their foreheads visible.
And it shows up in the character designs too. Especially in the Ichimura brothers.
When did he start putting his hair up? (laugh) Looks like his bangs got pulled back at some point too. A clear forehead boy.
So, how's everyone look with their hair pulled back?
Aw, too bad, it's not getting me going... what would I do if it did..... Here's some nightmarish things, I guarantee.


Since the regular book is all dark I thought I'd be idiotic in these extras.
Thank you for buying this book, this is Chrono.
Uhu! So you don't really care? That's so, but my hole's delicious! Lies!
"Chrono's sexual characteristics": Oh, I'm rather sexy-like. No, what I really look like is totally different.
It's said a lot, but the nape, the hand, and the collarbone, Yeah, I like those too.
What part of the body do I think is the sexiest?
This!
In my case, I just noticed it within the last few years, yeah, I'm scared too.
Which is to say... the hairline.
Yeah... forehead

Hurry up and become an adult!
PEACE MAKER.
huff huff White shirts, ties, I get going for Lehman <-- this is also lies
Next it's this.. not a body thing, but clothed people. Suits.
Then, what if we did everyone in suits?
A: It ceases being Shinsengumi... But it sure gets me going!
Suits may be a no-go, but personally, western clothing? I'm looking forward to it!
So come on, let's get married! In our feelings. (Laugh)
z z z
You're wonderful readers, thank you! "I'm that way too!" like that.
★ Bye! Write and run!

I'm so very sorry. The publication pace for the comics has increased, and I'm happy about that, but the extra pages are coming out all shabby...*whine*... There's no meaning to this extra!

Now, to the main subject, all that beginning was a bunch of stuff at the peak of idiocy, but in one book everything's taken a turn for the serious... I wonder how you liked it? To those who like gags, I'm sorry. The characters won't be smiling while killing! Above and beyond all, I'll be drawing with all my might!

I thought of a lot of things to say about the way Yamanami-san died here, but it doesn't look like I'm going to be able to talk about it, so I'm giving up. Anyway, if people who know history are shocked, I'm a success. I wonder how it was...

Well then, I keep writing on, I have no excuse. I'm very sorry for this! Next time the characters are going to be moving around a lot, so I'm looking forward to it too. If you like, I'll see you next time. Bye!

NANAE CHRONO.